This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Digitized by Google

922.821.5
B

BOOK PLATE OF

HARVARD
COLLEGE
LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TREATY

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The Truth about the Treaty

By

ANDRÉ TARDIEU

Foreword by

EDWARD M. HOUSE

Introduction by

GEORGES CLEMENCEAU

INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

Digitized by Google

COPYRIGHT 1921
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY

H 922.8J1.5
B

Printed in the United States of America

PRESS OF
BRAUNWORTH & CO.
BOOK MANUFACTURERS
BROOKLYN, N. Y.

Digitized by Google

FOREWORD

There are others who may be able to write as accurately and as interestingly concerning events which led up to the World War and the war itself, but there is no Frenchman, save Clemenceau, who can write with so much authority concerning the Peace Treaty, signed at Versailles, June 28, 1919, as André Tardieu.

M. Tardieu gets nothing second-hand. He was a participant in the events of which he writes. As a member of the Chamber of Deputies, he knew the currents of French political life, and he can write understandingly of the causes leading up to the great conflict. As an officer in the French Army, he can speak authoritatively of that glorious page in history of which he was a part.

This training served him well when he was called to assume a foremost rôle in the making of the peace. No man worked with more tireless energy, and none had a better grasp of the delicate and complex problems brought before the Congress. He was not only invaluable to France, but to his associates from other countries as well. He was in all truth the one nearly indispensable man at the Conference.

Therefore, if one would know of those fateful days in Paris when the Allies of France had gathered from the ends of the earth to have their reckoning with the Central Powers, it would be well to read *The Truth about the Treaty,* for here it is told by him who knows.

EDWARD M. HOUSE.

New York, March 3, 1921.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

INTRODUCTION

My Dear Friend:

It was near your heart, in face of the virulent attacks on our Peace Treaty, to set up the *truth* in print.

If I applaud, it is not that I think there is need to defend the men who made it. For when all the criticism was in, nearly every candidate sought their endorsement before going to the polls. But what a misery to reduce to personal concern, the immensity of the interests at stake. Alas! Nothing is less easily forgiven than success,—above all when it touches your critic in a tender spot.

Shall I add that an exact notion of duty, coupled with the pride of responsibility borne in the war which the Treaty was to close in triumph, forbade us to bring into the negotiations men whose views we had thus far never shared. Hence, disappointments which sooner or later were to find tongue.

Then enforcement entrusted to new hands, in the midst of grave difficulties, opened the door to recrimination. You know the old saying: "It is a bad workman who blames his tools."

The common people were quick to see that violence in attack is not enough to redeem failures in time of stress. The deadly parallel was all that was needed to enlighten those whose least excuse was not always that they were blind.

That is why, dear friend, it cost me so little—I, who was looking on from the bank—to turn away from this turmoil, telling you the while that the nation—having seen how great the trial—would continue its confidence to those who had won it bravely and honestly.

You agreed with me. But you were in the mêlée and claiming the right and duty to defend our common cause, you justly thought that it became you and your comrades to stand and meet the eager horde of assailants. It is fair to say that you have not spared yourself. This book bears witness to that.

Without waiting for time to put all things in place, you

Digitized by Google

wanted even now to pave the way for the coming of justice. Well may you be proud. You have so well laid the ax—as Demosthenes would say—to the heart of the iron thicket that, before the battle is well joined, its fate is sealed.

Soon events—foreseen and unforeseen—were to bring to your support the weight of facts made vivid in the full light of day.

This book prompted by your bold heart is above all an act of real wisdom. For nothing presses more at all times than to light the path of our Democracy, if it is to be able to govern itself instead of merely substituting one abuse of power for another.

Parliament—Public Opinion! Because the supreme power theoretically rests with them, there is great need that the brush-wood be cleared from around the things that are done with a reason.

Our institutions are the best in the world. To work them the best men in the world are none too good, above all if they are to be made of full effect.

Love of theory has perchance made us too exacting of our public bodies,—fallible because merely human. Tossed hither and yon, by honest conviction as well as by sordid interest, our "rulers," at the mercy of the current, seek the fair way without always finding it. To aid them it is enough to bring them light—ever more light—and to be without pity for the things that hide. But mind you never wait. Be quick with the counter-thrust of contradiction. For the will of to-day, as Machiavelli says, is the nail on which to-morrow's action hangs.

It is true. To maintain Parliament in the straight path of a power uncertain in its scope a free Press can be of decisive value. You have used it to wonderful purpose. And yet how comes it that in our democracies the Press leaves itself open to the suspicion that it shuts its eyes to more or less veiled attempts upon pure right? The Press has weapons enough for its defense.

Here—as a supreme safeguard—the inadequately prepared exercise of popular sovereignty finds its place. But for its thunder to be real and not of the stage, there is need for efficient preparation now lacking. If man always acted as he speaks, he would seem too near to God.

But as we now stand—rejoice thereat—when France really needs to make herself heard, I doubt not that she will do it with a loud voice.

In the matter of Versailles, any wide-spread misunderstanding

Digitized by Google

may have disastrous consequences before long. So you were more than right, dear friend, to wish that no excuse remain to those who, not having had things made plain to them, may try to feign that they do not understand. You have not left the least cloak to ignorance, not even excess of artlessness, if that fault can be imputed (especially in assemblies) to our day and generation.

Behold! You have done that which was near your heart, you have done it to the applause of all who are not deterred by private passion from the plain quest for the Truth.

The assailants have fallen back in disorder, some of them giving vent to exaggerations which brand them with their habitual discredit; others less bold who inspired them have completed the rout by the ostentatious appropriation of some of your own views.

How could I have doubted the issue, I who saw you in the days of sore trial bearing bravely—aye, even gaily—the heavy burden of your great responsibilities? Happy days when our opponents were those provided by the nature of things, days in which we gave for the victory of peace the same full measure of effort that war had demanded of us.

All around you, around your co-workers, there was a constant search for knowledge, a constant appeal to all sources of light. Each of you compiling, questioning, discussing, trying out on me and on others the strength of your arguments. You were preparing yourself by toil and labour for the arduous debates in which your splendid fighting spirit was met by gainsayers worthy of your cause as of their own. Ever ready for the fray, never downhearted, ill-satisfied with a half success, ever seeking steel,—that is what I saw of these much abused negotiators.

In those days you did not foresee the bitter diatribes even then being whetted in silent pent-up rage by men too slow to discover that all agreements are reached by compromise, and that a war won by four could not end in a peace dictated by one alone. What would you? If some to think well of themselves need to think ill of others.

Perhaps what astonishes most is that so many famed opponents were forced to confine themselves to criticism of such or such an article, each seeking to outbid the other without ever having seemed to realize that the question as a whole—a question of political and social history—had to be taken up at the place where war had broken it off and followed along new lines of international unity to permit the Europe of the future to live and prosper.

Digitized by Google

When one confines the field of debate to suit one's convenience, it is easy to wallow in invective but hard to pretend to the understanding of a diplomatic instrument which, renewing as it does from the ground up, all questions of world policy, beggars description.

All these Treaties of Peace to which so many famous personages set their names, without in some cases having laboured on them overmuch, were studied, drafted, built up free from the supervision of the modern Argus, beneath the inspiration of a master whose decisions were lauded before he had made them.

Whatever resentment the Treaty of Versailles has aroused, at least no one has been able to say that its ratification was not obtained by full knowledge and consent.

The ancient struggles for domination had always, till then, been settled by conquests of territory. Germany victorious, the Treaty could be but a question of her capacity for depradation. Germany vanquished, right resumed full sway and the victors were forced to disentangle themselves from the myriad difficulties that might had been unable to overcome. What an undertaking! And however incompletely realized, what audacity to have even attempted it!

The most irreconcilable opposition might have found there food for thought. It deemed it easier to raise its demand indiscriminately on all clauses, and then finally contented itself with a slackening of the terms we had succeeded in imposing. Where is this to end? I should have thought it inconceivable that a treaty could be enforced otherwise than by the fulfillment of the undertakings written in the bond.

Bernhardi it is who said that war is only the continuation of the pursuit of peace aims by other means. I can see in that nothing but the brutal assertion of a fact. After the awful war forced upon us, can our peace policy be other than the necessary sequel of the policy of forbearance which put all civilized peoples on our side the day that the Germans went so far as to try to do away with the right of France to live?

We have won this war not by our worth alone, but by the splendid aid of our trusty Allies. This asset must remain to us and we must give way a little on both sides in a spirit of friendship, not with ill temper that but lessens the price of consent and allows mortal hurts to subsist where agreement with good grace would have brought full measure of achievement.

Digitized by Google

Remember with what joy we hailed the sound of the first Allied gun. This does not mean that—after untold sacrifice made for ourselves assuredly but no less profitable to our associates who fought for their own salvation as well as for ours—we are reduced to submit meekly to the law of our friends. No! We did not save our just rights by war, to end by giving them up in peace.

But the past grips us still. Even at the moment of the Armistice, we could see arising here and there thoughts different indeed from those which filled our minds when, at Doullens or Abbeville, our whole energies bent on the next stand, we asked ourselves the dread question: Paris or Calais?

Waterloo and Sedan, to go back no further, forced upon us the painful care of a policy of reparation. While others filled with the hope of new things might allow themselves to be led away to the renewal of the past precautions against a France grown overstrong. There could be no greater folly. But is not the return to the past always the first impulse of countries whose power is founded upon the force of tradition?*

Nothing is more significant in this respect than the book of Mr. Keynes—one of the representatives of Great Britain at the Conference of Paris. With some knowledge of economics but neither imagination nor character, Mr. Keynes (who was not alone in his opinion) unrelentingly opposed "the abusive exactions of the Allies" (read: of France and of her delegates whose most elementary demands prevailed only with great difficulty) in the name of an alleged regard for "the capabilities of Germany." One can imagine how Berlin welcomed the aid thus tendered. What encouragement for all organized German resistance to the Treaty, to read from the pen of a former British delegate that we had *"shamelessly exaggerated the claims of our devastated regions."*

These reproaches and many others as brutally violent, of which I should have said nothing if their author without counting the cost had not thought to serve his cause by making them public, show clearly enough to what pitch certain minds had wrought themselves.

---

*A tiny instance can give some idea of the difficulties of agreement on all points. For France to obtain the right to subject to military service, for the exclusive defense of her own territory, the natives of the countries over which she obtained a mandate, it was necessary to assert the contrary principle and it was only at the end of a year that (see the texts) a right of interpretation was implicitly recognized to us which amounted to nothing less than the formal negation of the professed agreement. As to an express recognition, it was always energetically refused to us.

Digitized by Google

Perchance our French opponents will have the grace to see that we could not have both "betrayed" the Allies to the profit of France, as Mr. Keynes says; and France to the profit of the Allies as they themselves allege.

Without entering here into the consequences of theories of universal interdependence which, before any satisfaction had been given us, would afford the Germans the economic opportunity they need to resume their frustrated attempt at domination, I confine myself to noting that, though disapproved of by Mr. Keynes as excessive and by some Frenchmen as insufficient, the Treaty of Versailles is equally binding on all who signed it.

This is so true that our French opponents, after urging the Treaty's rejection or seeking to discredit it, have come by a sudden somersault, to demand the *rigorous enforcement* of the pact they so loudly condemned, holding their peace the while when they see its terms gradually slackened to our detriment, under German bluster.

I note the fact and none the less maintain according to Bernhardi himself that this Treaty, like all treaties, is and can only be a prolongation of war activities until complete fulfillment. This cannot be challenged unless it is desired—which no one has ever suggested—to wipe out the German defeat. Mr. Keynes himself does not go as far as that.

Our Allies must accept the facts. We are victorious by their aid. They are victorious by ours. And our common victory can only produce and maintain its full effect in peace by the continuation of our common undertakings.

It was not as warriors victorious in any ordinary military success that our soldiers appeared in the great war, that triumphal arch which—risen out of a great dream of domination now buried in the annals of history—gave passage at last to the standards of arms' noblest conquest—a peace of justice and of honour.

If I dare to say it, it was the glamour of hope in presence of the miracle of Waterloo reversed: Wellington coming to our aid to break the onslaught of Blücher; while France, by the side of America aroused, broke with the spirit of military hegemony which had passed from Napoleon to Bismarck and was to be forever crushed.

So many cruel mistakes, so many atrocious miseries, so many hopes frightfully blasted, the whole whoredom of man's past suffering stretched out under the gaze of the noble dead along an

Digitized by Google

avenue of heroic splendors blazing with the glory of France radiant and redeemed. And the men of France followed the lighted way towards the new duties of regenerated mankind.

However this peace of miracles remained to be fashioned with our hands, after we had seen it with our eyes. And for who was able to retain this vision, the miracle of the war won demanded an even greater miracle—the miracle of peace organized.

Alas, my dear Tardieu, the only certain miracles are those which we can ourselves perform. And if we would perform them, we must first get rid of that state of mind in which the past struggles instinctively in spite of ourselves to overcome the necessities of the present.

During the war, on the Fourth of July, the anniversary of American independence, as the United States troops paraded in front of the statue of Washington, Mr. Lloyd George said to me, smiling:

"Do you realize that you have made me assist in the celebration of England's greatest defeat?"

"And if your national pride still makes you regret the defeat," I answered, "I feel sure that you do not regret this day. What harm has come to you from this American independence which I see every day becoming more attractive to Canada, Australia and New Zealand, who have freely enlisted in the block of the four great Allies? There have been heavier accounts by far settled between your flag and mine. And yet it is with all my heart that every day I salute your flag at the front."

Thus we taught each other the new spirit of the future while waiting for the work of applying it. Let us take care not to begin by weaknesses cloaked under acceptable names. Let us beware above all of the weaknesses of a policy of procrastination.

Our beaten enemies have admirable qualities of action which they employed, under a master, from Sadowa to Versailles, to the most relentless advantage. Scruples are utterly foreign to them as was made so clear by the recreant band of their ninety-three intellectuals and moral leaders. They thought to grasp the realization of a dream of atrocious brigandage in which victory would excuse every crime, and the probabilities are that they would have conquered us in peace but for the mad act which forced military resistance upon us. Are they any better than their acts? The future alone can tell, but the answer may be inferred from the acid test of actual beginnings.

Digitized by Google

The start was not a happy one with von Brockdorff-Rantzau who, draped in brutish insolence, came to accuse us of "hating" Germany because we did not offer our necks to her executioners. Since then the policy of Germany has merely been to gather up every chance weapon that could enable her to evade the Treaty. Audacity and guile naturally increased under the encouragement of manifestations like that of Mr. Keynes or of the series of unholy concessions from which Germany has been led to deduce that her signature at Versailles binds her only subject to further discussions.

The hour of supreme warning came when the heads of the Allied Governments were told to their faces by a German delegate that, before they could usefully discuss, they "must cure themselves of the sickness of victory." And the Conference didn't break up! And the disavowal of the delirious swine was not even demanded! At least may this true Boche receive our thanks for his shameless frankness which dispels any illusions about the German case.

So on which side is there continuity of purpose? On which side vacillation?

What people is it that, abased and divided, having touched the bottom of the abyss, and unable to conceive any other ideal than the abuse of force—the shattered remnants of which litter the earth—still finds within itself a rebound of warped "dignity"—of savage insolence to defy its victors and to prepare openly for a mad revenge which without saving it, will throw the world into a new catastrophe?

And what people is it that united for the victory of right, having displayed the highest virtues in the most extreme peril—have allowed themselves to be flouted with impunity by a prostrate foe—without any remedy being offered but exhortation to patience and kind promises that one day moral courage will come into its own?

And yet each day of dangerous tolerance increases the forces of evil, and snatches opportunities from the happy outcome so dearly bought. Can one have forgotten what was the stake between ourselves and Germany—what defeat would have cost us, and what peace must assure to us!

The crowning or the overthrow of all the hopes aroused by victory, that, after all, is the issue which is being decided before our very eyes. Must we perhaps to-morrow return to the bloody battles whose cycle broken by us may, by our weakness, be reformed against us?

Digitized by Google

The country made no mistake about it. Not for a single moment did it take the bait of belittlement which would have led to the renunciation of the glorious conquests of the present for the will-of-the-wisp of words cunningly pieced together. The meaning of the elections was plain. The people of France had judged.

And so also the Germans, but in how different a manner.

If they have as yet been unable to fathom the depth of their irredeemable downfall; if they have as yet been unable to discern the real meaning of the crowning act of the great tragedy, they still feel surging within them the deep sources of a life of work and of will. Their trouble is that they see the future only through the blood-red mists of a civilization grafted upon the survival of barbarism. If they can make themselves over, they will, little by little, attain the position to which they are justly entitled in the world. If they cannot, the victors, whether they realize it or not, must continue to mount close guard over lands whose borders have become as President Wilson said, "the frontiers of freedom."

The maintenance of these frontiers which was the constant aim of French effort at the Conference, is of no small moment. It took the convulsions of a Russia thrown far out of her orbit and threatening Warsaw to reveal to minds wilfully closed, the fundamental issues of the Polish question. Once more the historic bravery of Poland stood the test. It was none the less fortunate that the Red Army quickly reached the end of its supplies and found itself abandoned by the Allies when its own Government was unable to renew them.

How many European questions are pending, to say nothing of the others!

First the most urgent. If, in the matter of balance of power, some have not sinned by excess of foresight, is not that an added reason why public men should keep a watchful eye upon those sectors whence clouds may arise upon the horizon?

Watchfulness for a day is not what is wanted. Who can measure the convulsions which this war has caused, or predict a time limit for the evolution of ever changing world conditions? Consider for example the century-long efforts to build up this Europe of ours which has fallen in ruins.

But what avails it to discuss the most intricate problems, the solution of which, always more or less a matter of chance, may lead to cruel mistakes, if personal quarrels magnified by misunder-

Digitized by Google

standings are to decide questions whose dangers are light-heartedly to be left to a future pregnant with the unknowable.

What avails it, having multiplied the means of prevision, having conquered the right of self-government by skilfully devised political adjustments, to shut one's eyes to urgent developments through fear of momentary embarrassments. What avails it to seek (oh, how keenly) the honour of responsibilities, only to shed them at the first encounter whether from faint heart or unavowable parliamentary interest?

What avails it to be content with appearances, if we are to see in changes of system nothing more than the triumph of mere words?

What avails it to have set ourselves up in the places of the kings of old, if we are to deny our ideals by our acts?

These questions handed down from our fathers, we shall transmit to our sons who will not fail to pass them on to posterity for ends the tangled skein of which will not soon be unravelled.

And yet we must live and, if all things remain pending in this world where naught is completed except by continual evolution, the first requisite of life is to make sure in the present day of those things whose lawful development is to determine one by one the moments of destiny.

This is the pressing duty of our day. The Treaty signed is but a fluttering scrap of paper unless it is enforced. To achieve this we put everything in action. For what result? That is what it is time to know.

War can lead to the domination of arms, as peace can lead to the slackening of our will. Man being wont to oppose himself to man by combinations of strength, the natural temptation to encroach upon one's neighbor entails a righteous resistance where the forces of each are measured. The strongest in this world—by that I mean the best—will be the most vigilant, the best prepared to defend themselves against every evil enterprise, the readiest to aid their harassed neighbor who, in turn, will come to their aid.

With or without treaty that is our common law; and Boche treachery is but a renewed invitation to us to be on our guard. If there are sentinels who slumber or allow themselves to be taken unawares, the people who have all at stake must react in their own defense. When I ask that public opinion be awakened, it is because too often those who have wielded power have wielded it only to put public opinion to sleep. Would you behold public opinion at work and at the same time judge those who are at such pains to deter it? Remember the great tragedy of the Second Punic War.

Digitized by Google

When Varro bowed down by defeat at Canna found himself under the walls of Rome, he was met by the Senate and the people came to congratulate him on not having despaired of the Republic. In this hour of mortal anguish, everything was great in the city of defeat. Some met the extreme peril with dauntless courage, others imposing silence on legitimate anger, found in supreme responsibility a grand revolt and last great effort; salvation was the reward of a miracle, than which none finer has ever been seen.

Rome knew such greatness that the infinite abjection of its decadence has never been able to tarnish the memory thereof. Was ever a moment when this people, of which history is so replete, gave a more marvelous exhibition of moral splendour and of triumphant confidence in the strength of its will power?

It is at such junctures that hearts are made manifest. The weak and the strong are at one. Rome wills it. Not a murmur is heard. Of complaints, recriminations, evil insinuations, not a whisper. Not a tremour of weakness. Not even an idle word. The strong-souled and feeble-hearted alike are proof against the terrors of disaster.

The nation which by surfeit of weakness had brought this day to pass, is the same which in the midst of the catastrophe suddenly found itself again. All that they were and all that they had was given to the State. And Fabius, who had seen Varro preferred to him, who after having been accused of cowardice because he was unwilling to risk battles like that which so nearly wiped Rome off the face of the earth, Fabius marched in the parade which brought to the vanquished leader the homage of a sublime faith that Varro victorious would have awaited in vain. A great wave of super-human will-power has swept away all hesitations, all the errors, all the miseries and crimes which go to rot in the discard of history, leaving behind only the resistless forces of rebirth. The episode assumes such grandeur that the halo of Rome melts into the apotheosis of mankind. One is proud to be a man, if man no matter whence he come, or where he goes, can rise so high.

But I have strayed far from our critics and from the surly attitude which it has pleased some of them to adopt. Will it be urged that victory accounts for many shortcomings—tempts many to depart from "the street called straight" by the assurance it gives of the future—whereas the extremity of misfortune may give rise to the highest reactions? That is too easy a way out. Far greater than the duel between Carthage and Rome, portentous indeed though it was, is the drama of domination fought out between

Digitized by Google

modern Germany and the nations who were able to save the independence of the world. An old saying alleges that one is never so vanquished nor so victorious as one seems. If Rome took her revenge, Hannibal has often been charged with having lent her the support of his strategy.

Who indeed in the hour of victory can say what its scope will be? Who indeed when the sun set over Austerlitz could have foreseen its rise over Moscow and Waterloo? Victories in themselves are but the brutal crushing of one military force by another. The conquerors must show themselves capable of improving their victory. For that men and time are needed.

No one suggests that the discontented have not found weak spots in our victory. The underlying causes of all alliances conspire—no matter what one says or does—to rise to the light of day. Should this not have been guarded against, more especially as the Government was bound to secrecy? And as the peace of to-morrow could be based only on the confidence of the country in the means provided by the Government of victory, who could be so blind as to undermine it to the point of attempting to ruin in the minds of the victors the very means of regeneration, the "rigorous enforcement" of which is now being clamorously urged?

Finally were there not, as to-day, Germans, beaten but not crushed, ready by a rare blending of shameless trickery and pugnacity to aspire to hegemony? Could the belittlement of victory, could the heightening of the morale of defeat serve any useful purpose? Alas, the attempt has already borne fruit so abundant that I fear to make things worse by casting up the account. To-day, as yesterday, as to-morrow, no continuation of success can be expected save from the interior discipline of peoples worthy of conceiving and of realizing the new order of a just peace of labour.

Vanquished, our lot under Ludendorff would not have differed from that of Rome under Hannibal. Victorious, we have assumed our responsibility in the most noble effort to achieve a lasting peace by the sole forces of Right. To one and all such a state was well worth a general effort of self-restraint instead of the old rush to divide the spoils between those who had overcome the enemy.

The future will decide. The mastery rests with him who wills most strongly and most enduringly. Ambition is of worth but by its aim. The higher the aim, the nobler the character, the stronger the will must be. Neither nobility of aspiration nor strength of

Digitized by Google

courage can be lacking to France. Fixity of ideas, method and continuity of purpose have been the three things most lacking in our history. Can we not derive from the trials of these times the strength to enhance the glories of war—inadequate to nourish a nation—by a superior use of those attainments of peace which so often were the glory of our past?

To make sure of the future, we must forge it ourselves. Hammers and anvils are there. How about our brawn?

These ideals are all your own, my dear friend, and they radiate in your pages from the light of well-ordered facts. I thank you once again for having served them well.

Your good friend,

G. CLEMENCEAU.

TO M. ANDRÉ TARDIEU,
PARIS

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	GERMAN AGGRESSION	1
II	THE WAR AND THE ARMISTICE	27
III	THE PEACE CONFERENCE	77
IV	THE DISARMAMENT OF GERMANY	125
V	THE LEFT BANK OF THE RHINE	145
VI	TREATIES OF GUARANTEE	202
VII	ALSACE AND LORRAINE	233
VIII	THE SARRE BASIN	250
IX	WHAT GERMANY MUST PAY	280
X	HOW THE ALLIES WILL BE PAID	320
XI	GERMAN UNITY	353
XII	RECONSTRUCTION AND THE FUTURE OF FRANCE	376
XIII	HOW THE PEACE IS BEING ENFORCED	409
XIV	FRANCE; GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES	437

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

The Truth about the Treaty

CHAPTER I

GERMAN AGGRESSION

Never was an international crime more flagrant than Germany's attack on France of August 2, 1914; never one more deliberately planned.

I can still see Baron von Schoen, the Kaiser's Ambassador, standing on the steps of the Quai d'Orsay as with feigned regret he takes leave of M. de Margerie, now French Ambassador at Brussels but then Political Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The German Representative bows deprecatingly. He seems to say, as his Master said a few weeks later, "I did not will all this." Yet at that very moment and without any declaration of war, German troops had already (thirty-four hours previously) crossed our frontier and invaded our soil. This very invasion had been planned for half a century.

In 1871, Germany had torn from us Alsace-Lorraine, the flesh of our flesh, two of the most French of the French provinces bound by every tie to all our past; two provinces which for centuries had given us, had given France—the oldest, most closely knit and most responsive of nations—generals and statesmen, men of science and of letters. Germany refused to heed the cry of despair raised at Bordeaux by their representatives. By "blood and iron," to quote Bismarck, she had sealed her victory and welded her unity with the rape of our provinces of which she made the bulwark of her power at our very door. Five and twenty years later, Bismarck cynically boasted: "We did not conquer Alsace and Lorraine because their people

Digitized by Google

loved us, or turned their thought to Germany. That did not matter to us. Their annexation was a geographical necessity. It is quite presumptuous to ask us to worry whether the Alsacians and Lorrainers want or do not want to be German. That is none of our business.'"* Neither hesitation before; nor repentance after.

This unhallowed gain won by sheer might, does not suffice to Germany, or rather to retain it she has to have something more. Hence the policy which forty-three years later led to another war, by a succession of events the very logic of which is its most crushing condemnation. Germany seeks not only to keep the territory stolen from France, but to make secure by arms her domination of the Continent rendered possible by the Treaty of Frankfort. For this it is not enough that France shall be conquered and despoiled; she must be isolated and paralyzed as well. It is not enough that Alsace-Lorraine, the piety of whose popular attachment for France was unconquerable, shall live beneath the Prussian yoke; the political structure of Europe must be such that never in any manner or at any time shall German domination be challenged. To build up this domination, as well as to defend it in case it were ever threatened, every means will be employed—not excepting war. Half a century of history has here its source.

As early as 1875, this settled determination reveals itself by the threat of a fresh aggression. France is recovering too rapidly. To complete her ruin is a duty to Germany and to mankind. The awakening of Russia and Great Britain, conscious—too late—of the mistake they made in 1870, foils Bismarck who vents his disappointment in bitter jests, but sets to work at once to prevent its recurrence. Two Powers exerting their influence in favour of France have been able to hold him in check; against France therefore he determines to group forces which will give him undisputed control of Europe and cement his victory for ever. On October 7, 1879, he signs a Treaty with Austria-

*Speech at Friedrichsruhe, April 24, 1895.

Digitized by Google

Hungary. On May 20, 1882, one with Italy. Germany is now at the head of a coalition of 170,000,000 men which from the North Sea to the Mediterranean commands Europe and cuts it in two. She is the arbiter of a peace which she both imposes and guarantees. From the treaties on which it is based this coalition borrows a defensive appearance; as a matter of fact, its aims are offensive and it is ready to attack. To render France's isolation more complete, supplementary pledges are secured from quarters whence they were least to be expected. Russia, defeated at the Congress of Berlin by Bismarck's iron will, promises on March 21, 1884, and on November 18, 1887, to remain neutral if Germany is attacked by a third Power. Great Britain, losing sight, in her colonial controversies with France, of the controlling necessities of her foreign policy, signs extra-European agreements in quick succession with Germany, and lends a ready ear to inspirations from Berlin. An unyielding armour is thus encased around the Treaty of Frankfort to ensure the retention of its territorial and political advantages. Germany is the centre of Europe and plays off all her other neighbors against the one she cannot forgive herself for having spared in 1870.

Never did France live more bitter years; never did country so placed show so much restraint or such calm dignity. M. Clemenceau said in 1919: "Just think, for fifty years we were the wounded hero. Wounded heroes are all very fine but people go their way and pass by on the other side looking on them with pity." Such was the plight of France. Imprudence would have been criminal; for we were alone. Surrender would have been infamous; for the future was in our keeping. To realize the ordeals through which we passed to win the right to Victory, our British and American friends must study this period of our history. As our national life revives, Jules Ferry seeks an outlet for it and our activity makes itself felt in the Colonies. From 1882 to 1888, the Tricolor of peace, order and liberty floats over Tunis, South-Algeria, Senegal, the Soudan, Dahomey, the Congo, Madagascar, Djibouti, Ton-

Digitized by Google

kin and Annam. At times Bismarck feigns to view our colonial advance without offense, even to encourage it. But how brutally he reminds us again and again that naught is permitted to us without his consent.

Every year sees Alsace-Lorraine atrociously hazed; frontier incidents precipitated by the Imperial police; military laws ostentatiously passed. Germany, it is declared, will enforce the Treaty of Frankfort so long as a single German remains. "With that," it is added, "all is said." Bismarck, who in 1870 scorning his Sovereign's reticence had openly declared that he was making war not only on Napoleon III but on France herself, spares his victim no insult: we are envious, turbulent, quarrelsome people; worthless; a herd of thirty million Cafers: "Scratch the Frenchman," he said, "and you will find the Turco." Year by year, we are lectured on "German forbearance" as if it were nearly exhausted. The Imperial War budget is increased by fifty million marks; the Army by seventy thousand men. "We Germans fear God, and naught else in the world!" France and Europe are warned that they have a master. It is in vain that, obedient to Gambetta's advice, we hide our sorrow deep within our hearts "never speaking of it." It is in vain that we bear the cross of our country's humiliation silently,—in the oppressive peace imposed upon us. Germany is not content with what she has conquered; to military victory she is determined with proud boasting to add political supremacy.

Firm as was her will not to unloose war, it was inevitable that France should aspire to breathe freely once more. It was no less inevitable that Europe, while keeping the peace, should wish it established on other bases. Following all periods of hegemony, no matter who profited thereby—Charles-Quint, Louis XIV, Frederick the Great or Napoleon—the same thing has happened: political balance has been restored. This law makes itself felt for the first time in 1892 with the Franco-Russian alliance. It is a precious guarantee for France which thus emerges from the solitude nobly endured for twenty years; at the same

Digitized by Google

time, it guarantees the German conquests; for it is concluded on the basis of territorial *status quo* and far from raising any hopes that our wrongs may be righted, it secures Germany's possession of Alsace-Lorraine. It is a further proof of France's attachment to peace. It is not the only one. During the ensuing years, the same attachment prompts France to enter into colonial agreements with various Powers for the settlement of old disputes and to pave the way for friendly agreements in an unchanged Europe: conventions with Italy in 1900, with Great Britain in 1904, with Spain the same year; conventions of limited scope in which France—as in the Russian alliance—found proof of the prestige she had regained, but which contained neither provocation nor threat against any Power.

From the first, this rebirth of European political activity outside of Germany, directed not against her but against her hegemony, found the German Government determined to dominate or to destroy the forces which were regrouping. For Bismarck and his successors it did not suffice, as I have already pointed out, to keep the conquered territories; it was essential that German political supremacy should remain unchallenged in a divided Europe. On the morrow of the Franco-Russian alliance, Germany had hoped to gain admittance and events in the Far East in 1895—through the joint action of the three Cabinets of Berlin, Paris and St. Petersburg—had justified this expectation. But as time passed and other agreements ensued from which Germany continued to be excluded, a policy of reprisals took the place of the conciliatory opportunism hitherto practised. The Kaiser seeks "to safeguard the monument reared by his unforgettable grandfather." The Austro-Hungarian alliance is still in existence; as is also the Italian. Germany, no matter what she says to justify herself, is not "isolated." But France by political honesty and efficiency has regained the initiative in international affairs, and this initiative in itself is an insult to German greatness as conceived by the Hohenzollerns and their subjects.

Digitized by Google

Among all the "opportunities" which presented themselves—I borrow the word from Prince von Bülow—Germany is henceforth on the look-out for the one which will enable her to prove that her vaunted supremacy is still intact. By "pressure and counter-pressure"—another of Prince von Bülow's charming phrases—she strives to paralyze or undo that which has been done without her. Like a gambler who has won heavily, she will hesitate for ten years to stake the sum total of her assets. She will be threatening when circumstances seem to favour her; cautious when her luck turns. She will speak of war without declaring it and boast of "dry powder" and the "sharpened sword" so long as she retains hope that her ends may be achieved by political manœuvres. But the day she realizes that Europe, even while consenting to the heavy sacrifices entailed, is determined to free itself from German tutelage and to order its own life without looking to Berlin for guidance, then, unhesitating and unswerving, she will with cold calculation complete her preparations and at her own hour hurl herself—leaders and people of a single heart—into the "fresh and joyous" war!

The plan unfolds in 1904 when Russia, at war with Japan, is condemned to inaction in Europe. The surrender of Port Arthur on January 1, 1905, deals the first blow to Russian power in the Far East; on February 11, Herr von Kuhlmann, the German Chargé d'Affaires in Morocco, presents his French colleague with a formal protest against the Anglo-French agreement of April 8, 1904, though Prince von Bülow, the Imperial Chancellor, had twice declared the year before that "he had no objection to make to it as far as German interests were concerned." On March 10, 1905, the Russian Armies sustain a bloody defeat at Moukden; on the twelfth of the same month, the Kaiser announces his visit to Tangiers which marks the opening of the Moroccan controversy with France. On May 27, Admiral Rodjestvenski's fleet is annihilated at Tsousima; on June 12, the menace to France becomes so acute that the French Government by accepting the resignation of

Digitized by Google

M. Delcassé, its Minister of Foreign Affairs, acknowledges that Germany has won the first round. For nearly ten years, under varying aspects, we shall see the same thing. In 1906 Germany drags us to Algeciras. Because of her Moroccan interests? No, but to furnish a striking demonstration that, the moment she opposes it, the Anglo-French agreement becomes inoperative and sterile. Again in 1908 she tries to pick a quarrel with us in Morocco, this time over three deserters from the Foreign Legion. This same year, she threatens Russia in order to detach her from Serbia and obliges her to accept, without more ado, the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1911, she despatches a war-ship to the Moroccan coast and forces upon us a settlement which, if it increases our freedom of action in the Cherifian Empire, costs us part of the French Congo. It is the policy of continuous tension and of chronic provocation.

These succeeding outbursts bring Germany little or no gain. Neither in 1905, nor in 1906, nor in 1908, nor in 1911, does she manage to secure a foothold in Morocco; any more than she succeeds in 1908 and 1909 in eliminating Russian influence from the Balkans despite concessions wrung from St. Petersburg. Likewise, and on each occasion more signally, she fails in her master design of destroying the agreements entered into without her. Neither the Franco-Russian alliance, nor the understandings of France with Great Britain and Italy are dissolved. They survive Algeciras as well as Agadir. Moreover beneath the German menace certain of the understandings grow and change their character. They are not yet alliances, but they are already much more than mere settlements of controversies. During the crisis of 1911, one of Mr. Lloyd George's speeches quite plainly forecasts the possibility of that common action which the aggression of 1914 is to bring into being three years later and which had been rendered more possible by the rapprochement between Great Britain and Russia after 1907. Italy does not withdraw from the Triple Alliance, but constantly abused and

Digitized by Google

overridden on the strength of a Treaty which had brought neither guarantees nor promises to her vital interests in the Mediterranean, she cherishes plans for the future which the war, in 1915, is to bring to a head. Even the United States itself is brought face to face at the Conference of Algeciras with Germany's insidious efforts towards political domination and sides with France against the proposals of Berlin which President Roosevelt declares to be "inacceptable."

In 1911, the general failure of German diplomacy is as obvious as her local rebuff in Morocco. The Imperial Minister of Colonies resigns as a protest, but he is not the only one who is dissatisfied. Germany, the scope and rapidity of whose economic development has been marvelous, is the prey of political disappointment. She has kept Alsace-Lorraine. She has maintained the Austro-Hungarian and the Italian alliances. She is sure of Turkey where her Ambassador is the real ruler; sure of Roumania where a Hohenzollern is on the throne; sure of Bulgaria whose Czar believes only in Might. Yet despite these formidable assets she perceives, in the Franco-Anglo-Russian alignment which she has strengthened with her own hands, the visible limitation of her power. On three or four occasions when she has raised her voice—and raised it loudly—this group has answered her, answered her in moderate and conciliatory tones. In 1905, 1906, 1908, 1909, 1911, these answers had been invariably pacific and composing. But on the one hand, France is no longer alone; on the other, Europe is divided into two camps which, however formidable the German power, might if necessary measure their strength. William the First's "monument" which the Kaiser had sworn to maintain, is thus threatened with ruin. On all sides and by all means, the latter has sought to shore it up and restore it by diplomacy; everywhere he finds the road to hegemony blocked.

Henceforth the die is cast and cast for war. Three years are needed to bring to a point of absolute perfection the military machine so carefully built up and trained

Digitized by Google

since the victory of 1871: three years to bring in and convince the "junior partners" whose support is indispensable for such an enterprise; three years—as in 1867—to find a favourable opportunity which will make possible the overthrow in a few weeks, by a few stunning blows of adversaries less well prepared and less well armed; three years and Germany returning to what one of her Princes called the "national industry" will seek by war to re-establish that power which peace had not abolished, but had rightly limited.

II

This "call to arms" decided upon in cold blood by the German Government was to find the adversaries of yesterday and of to-morrow in widely divergent postures. The one, France, profoundly attached to peace, so long as it no longer meant servitude, and confident in its duration; the other, Germany, physically and spiritually intent on war. I have roughly sketched the political events of forty years; but the historian is false to his task who does not seek beneath the surface for those underlying impulses which animate national will. Behind the governments directing the moves, where stood the people?

The France of 1911, faithful guardian of the traditions of the race, honest, brave and free, differed somewhat from the France that had known defeat. To the generation branded by disaster another generation had succeeded which, not having suffered directly from defeat, sometimes failed to recognize its causes and its consequences. The "spirit of revenge," so often invoked by Germany as an excuse for her provocation, no longer existed. Had it, in the real sense of the word, ever existed? It is doubtful. A few noble minds and brave hearts like Paul Deroulede; a few momentary outbursts had at certain hours given tangible form to this feeling. But the nation as a whole—whether it be praised or blamed therefor—was foreign to these movements as facts have shown. Boulangism, born of internal discontent rather than of great international

Digitized by Google

aspirations, had been but a brief flash in the pan. The memory of Alsace-Lorraine lived in our hearts but how were the lost provinces to be recovered? Before the Russian alliance, we had been too isolated to challenge the *status quo;* afterwards, we were bound to respect it. Years had passed without a single act of revenge. Hope remained, a religion which no one surrendered. But between hope and reality peace endured at first and then, accepted, reared a wall.

The men of my generation who reached maturity about 1900, faced this painful problem with the patriotism of resignation. Those amongst them who had closely studied history had little belief in the efficacy of resignation to span the moral abyss created by Bismarck between France and Germany. But by far the greater number, allowing themselves to live with the times, paid little heed to the warnings of the past. The courtesies of the German Emperor in our days of national mourning—the deaths of Carnot and of Mac-Mahon, the burning of the Charity Bazaar—and in the days of our national pride, such as the Exhibition of 1900, were not without effect. German penetration of France, of which the ever rising tide of emigration was but a minor means, proceeded everywhere with extraordinary thoroughness. Our financiers were becoming accustomed to sleeping partnerships in which—as in the Bagdad matter—French money furnished German direction with a bond capital for which the regular payment of dividends was but a very inadequate return. Our Socialists, hoodwinked by the material and political prosperity of German Socialism, were content after the Congress of Amsterdam to be the minor brethren of the Marksist order. Our conservatives, to whom imperial diplomacy laid assiduous siege in the salons, were not insensible to the fascination of social order as exemplified by the German Empire. There was infiltration in every strata of French society.

No one, it is true, would have dared to propose an alliance which honour and prudence equally forbade. Not

Digitized by Google

only would such an undertaking, necessarily based upon recognition of the *fait accompli,* have obliged France to subscribe anew to the Treaty of Frankfort,—and that without the excuse of those who in 1871 had signed beneath the mailed fist. But in addition this surrender would have involved a breach of faith which the country would have refused to accept; a breach of faith which would have been the negation of forty years of effort and the betrayal of that policy of peace and balance which will remain the imperishable glory of the Third Republic; a breach of faith in proclaiming by an abrupt reversal of our alliances the instability of our democracy; a breach of faith in substituting for friends who had treated us as equals an ally who, unconsciously perhaps and by sheer historic tradition, would sooner or later have become a master. But if no one spoke of an alliance, many yielded to the temptation of extending special agreements such as those which the desire for peace had prompted the French Government to enter into in 1905, 1906, 1909 and 1911. As early as 1890 the aged Jules Simon under the spell of the young Emperor had returned from the Labor Conference of Berlin with the hope of such a thing, and in the following years those of our fellow country men who at the Kiel regattas and elsewhere had fallen beneath the sway of Imperial seduction were over ready to recommend this form of morganatic Franco-German alliance. Had it not been for the continual provocation of Germany in Morocco and the Near East from 1905 on, there is little doubt that before long the idea of a rapprochement would have made headway.

Besides the political evolution of our Republic held us aloof from all idea of war. Not that the Republic—despite the difficulties of its birth in the throes of defeat, despite the handicap of a constitution drafted by its enemies—would have been incapable of having a foreign or a military policy: the war of 1914 furnished a triumphant answer to the doubts of reaction on these scores by showing that France could count both on the support of free peoples and upon the services of an Army which at the Marne single

Digitized by Google

handed checked the German onslaught. It is none the less true that the spirit of democracy—the soul of all our laws since 1877 and the practical expression of the individualist philosophy of the eighteenth century—is in its very essence a spirit of peace. Peace in its highest expression which proclaims the right both of individuals and of nations to live and be respected; lasting peace because political power entrusted to the majority insures the welfare of the greatest number and because legislation inspired thereby is repugnant to preparation for war and the increase of armaments.

France, the most warlike of nations on the field of battle, had in peace lost her military habit of mind. At the top, painful controversies, like the Dreyfus case, had brought about a cleavage between the political leaders and the military chiefs; at the bottom the easy leisure of national existence provoked frequent protests against the obligations imposed by the military training of the nation. In 1905, at the very moment when Germany was beginning to rattle her sabre, the term of compulsory service had been reduced by a third. Three years later, in 1908, an even worse imprudence had reduced the period of instruction of the reserves, a measure in flagrant contradiction with the former, as the shorter the time spent in the initial training of recruits the more thorough and complete should be the instruction given to the reserves. In a word no one believed war possible. No one believed it possible because its atrocities were repugnant to men's ordinary vision. No one believed it possible because no one wanted war, and that being the case nobody believed that others wanted it. Not a Frenchman would have supported his Government in a war of aggression. Too many Frenchmen made the mistake of judging Germany by what France was, and of supposing Germany incapable of that which they knew France herself to be incapable of. Anyone who recalled the past in order to throw light upon the future and to dispel a dangerous sense of security met with disapproval. I have a right to say this and to recall that for ten years it was

Digitized by Google

my own experience. It took ten years of German threats and blackmail to make the French Government, in 1913, take precautionary measures which, being hurriedly improvised, were naturally imperfect and incomplete. France, full of optimism and faith in the progress of mankind, would not listen to talk of war.

France would not listen to talk of war for another reason. Conscious of her past defeat, and unconscious of her present strength, France inclined to the belief that war would only bring fresh reverses. At the beginning of the Moroccan crisis and in the course of its evolution, there were not lacking political men and parties who proclaimed that "France was not ready," dangerous talk in a country where the public mind is prone to believe bad news rather than good. The Frenchman is not loath to speak ill of other peoples, even when they are his friends; but he is even readier to speak ill of himself. It has often been remarked that in 1914 America and Great Britain knew very little about us and did not even suspect the reserves of energy and of abnegation which the war called forth. If America and Great Britain did not know France, their excuse is that France did not know herself. Read the French papers from 1900 to 1914 and see if you can find the slightest hint of the splendid picture that the following months are to present,—it is not there. Petty quarrels of politicians and parties, magnified by the Press, distorted the view not only of foreigners but of Frenchmen as well. The true France was hidden. Ignorance of one's strength leads men to seek the path of least resistance. People said and economists taught that "war was impossible." People also said, "Of war, we will have none." Thus one sees why all our compromises with Germany, painful though they were, met with the approval of the great majority, both in Parliament and in the country. Thus one sees why France, by reason alike of her qualities and of her faults, was so deeply attached to peace at the very moment when Germany had decided upon war. If, in 1914, Germany had wanted peace she would as in previous years have

Digitized by Google

found France ready to enter into the necessary agreements. If Germany had wanted peace, France more than any other nation would have helped her to preserve it. But Germany wanted war!

Germany wanted war and, here again, we must go beneath and beyond the will of Governments to reveal and examine the soul of the governed. War is the very basis and origin of the intellectual and moral beliefs which go to make up modern German patriotism. War created the German ideal which proved strong enough to place the whole of Germany under Prussian control in less than fifty years. Conceived in the imagination of politicians, historians and poets, it needed the iron hand of a Prussian junker to give it practical shape. Then the Hohenzollerns, who, thanks to the genius of Bismarck, made themselves the servants as well as the beneficiaries of this ideal, fashioned it in their own image. There is a German patriotism; as France knows but too well after 1870 and 1914. But this German patriotism is essentially different from French patriotism. Our patriotism holds France sacred as the emblem of traditions many centuries old and woven even more of memories of peace than of recollections of war. German patriotism holds war sacred. Patriotism to them is first and foremost the emblem of profit accruing from war and the recognition of war as the origin of power and of wealth. Saxons, Hessians and Bavarians—more particularly their Princes—may at times have mourned the loss of ancient liberties surrendered to Prussia; but when Saxons, Hessians and Bavarians compared their erstwhile poverty to the prosperity they derived from the Empire they felt that they were German and nothing but German. The spirit of nationality is not, in Germany as it is in France, the common faith of men who for centuries have lived under a common law; it is an association of material interests which has passed from bankruptcy to prosperity and intends to safeguard the mainspring of its opulence. German patriotism, which a hundred years ago was an ideal conception of its philoso-

Digitized by Google

phers, has since 1870 been based upon materialism. Germany means, to the people of the South as to those of the North, increased well-being, growing markets, rising wages and soaring dividends. It means also attachment to the rule of Might and remembrance of the sudden appeal to force which brought about this change, of the victorious war without which success would have been impossible. Thus the idea of war is inseparable in the German mind from the idea of country. Deep down in the heart of every thinking German who knows his history, the "fatherland" stands for war.

This moral unity pervades every class of society. Consider the Socialists whose doctrines should make them opposed to war, especially to a war of aggression. The prosperity of labour due to the Empire and to war is so closely bound to both that, the day the Empire will decide on war—the most flagrantly aggressive war—the whole Socialist party will follow and it will need our Marne victory to remind even a small minority of its tenets. Why? Because more than any other party, by reason of its numbers, it is vitally interested in the success of Germany & Co., because it has not forgotten the origins of Imperial success and because it pins its faith, for the protection and development of the acquired assets, upon those who first made it great. From German labour let us pass to the intellectuals. Here the spirit of military discipline rivals that existing in the trade-unions, which in turn is no wit less than that flourishing in the barracks. One day in 1905, Prince von Bülow, then Imperial Chancellor, said to me: "In France your Universities are schools of debate and of political and social criticism. In Germany our Universities are the strongholds of fanatical nationalism." Nothing could be more accurate. Material advantages which transformed German Socialism into an Imperial party stamp the same character upon German intellectualism. Higher education no less than trade-unionism is at the service of an ideal born beneath a spiked helmet.

Turn now to Germany's book-of-hours for 1911, writ-

Digitized by Google

ten by Bernhardi, a soldier save the mark! "It is enough to examine with unflinching eyes the function of the sword and its terrible effects to see clearly that war is a task which divine in itself is as necessary as eating and drinking." So much for the principle, now for its application: "We cannot by any means avoid war.....and we must by no means delay it unduly but on the contrary *provoke* it in the most favourable circumstances." However this soldier had invented nothing. As early as 1848, the Parliament of Frankfort, the first manifestation of German unity, cheered the bombardment of Prague by the Austrians and some years later Treitschke, the master of German historical science, wrote: "It is not fitting that Germans should repeat commonplaces of peace apostles nor that they should shut their eyes to the harsh necessities of our times. Yes, our age is an age of war, an age of iron. The triumph of the strong over the weak is the inexorable law of life." There is the doctrine. France has never known any such, and this in itself suffices to distinguish the two peoples.

The political spirit thus formed is simply one of *raison d'état*. It was in 1801 that Metternich, who knew what he was talking about, showed Prussia "emancipated from all sense of duty, exploiting the misfortunes of others, without the slightest regard for her obligations or her promises." Cast your eyes down the line of Bismarck's successors. Might always placed above Right, with Germany applauding. The elegant skepticism of a von Bülow—by far the most distinguished of the lot—is but a mask. In Might he trusts! It is upon the presumption that none will dare to defy German power that he rests his whole diplomacy, all the while proclaiming it devoted to peace. But the day when the others neither will nor can give way any further, it will be war, and war is thus in fact at the very basis of the system,—war and contempt for Right! Bülow, a true disciple of Bismarck, declares: "In the hard world in which we live, one must be either anvil or hammer." His choice is quickly made. Kuhlmann,—a pupil of von Bülow, echoes the same sentiments: "I have waged relentless war

Digitized by Google

upon principles. They are justifiable in morals, but not in politics. Here it is a question of aims, not of means." Germany, be it not forgotten, listens to all this and applauds.

And to sum up this cynical profession of faith this is how the last Chancellor—Bethmann-Hollweg, a mediocre and for that very reason a thoroughly representative official,—expresses himself: "Necessity knows no law." The unanimous approval which this axiom elicited in August, 1914, shows that Germany, industrious and painstaking but wrought up by that "moral wickedness" of which Nietzsche speaks as "flowing in her veins with the blood of her ancestors," the whole of Germany was long since ready to accept it. From 1870 on, the German received training for war from the cradle up, training for war at his mother's knee, training for war at school, in the university, in the Army, training for war in every walk of life. Germany turned towards war, as flowers turn towards the sun.

In France there were some who took heart saying, "Germany is too rich to make war." A poor understanding indeed of the nature and origin of her wealth. Germany has accumulated prodigious wealth in less than half of a century. But this result too rapidly attained has not been unaccompanied by crises. The first had fallen in 1901, memorable year of bankruptcies and failures. In 1911 and the following months the situation although less critical remained tense, so tense indeed that more than one German, familiar with history and remembering the great impetus given by victory in 1870, began to believe the normal play of competition to be neither the best nor the surest means to conquer markets, settle balances and feed the Treasury. Such Germans saturated with their national traditions looked upon war as business; just as their Government conducted business as if it had been war. Thus grew up that close union of politics and economics which is so typical of the German public mind. Some dreamed of dominating an enslaved Europe; others—like Wagner's "Nibelung"—lusted for the possession of gold. Both were

Digitized by Google

agreed that, at certain hours of a nation's life, victorious war offers the shortest cut both to domination and to gold. On the one hand the intellectuals of the Universities—all ready to draft—remember the ninety-three and their odious manifesto of 1914—the philosophical justification of a war of plunder; on the other the great captains of industry equally ready to furnish the military chiefs with the elements of the famous plan for the destruction of French factories.* Bernhardi's call was answered by the six great industrial concerns of Germany who several months later demanded "the annexation of all the special iron ore of Briey, including the fortresses of Longwy and Verdun, without which the mining region could not be protected," as well as the coal basins of the North of France. "For," they very frankly added, "the possession of coal is at least as important as that of iron ore."

Such the Germany of 1911. She is unanimous. The notion of war, rejected by all other nations as the last vestige of a bygone age, is ever present in her mind. One finds it everywhere associated vaguely but intimately with their every conception of national and international life. It presents itself to them with all the glamour of the past, all the hopeful promise of the future. Whenever the Government decides to pass from the notion to the act of war, the whole people will unhesitatingly follow. This is what happened in 1914. Blind indeed must he have been who, three years earlier, did not see!

Besides where was the risk? War, Germany's national industry, could but be victorious, for France was not an adversary to be feared. I said just now that before the war France did not know herself; but how much less did Germany know France. I know no instance of political information so totally and utterly false as that which the Imperial German Government collected concerning us during the ten years prior to the war. This lack of understanding appeared in the suggestions which the Emperor and his satellites sometimes ventured to let fall in the ears

*See Chapter IX, page 281.

Digitized by Google

of French visitors: "Let us be friends. Let us unite your graces to our might." Germany, dupe of her desires, deeply despised France. She believed France divided, weak and corrupt. For Germany the pleasure resorts of Paris—mostly frequented by Germans—seemed by comparison with her self-estimated virtue to be typical of "Modern Babylon." Our military and other shortcomings were exaggerated by the reports of diplomats seeking to curry favour by judging us harshly. War appealed to the majority of Germans, when they thought of it, as much by the profit they expected to derive from it as by the smallness of the risk which attached to it in their eyes. War against an ill-armed and misgoverned France would be, for a people in partnership with God, nothing more than a military parade enhanced by the prospect of much loot. Revolution would break out at the first battle. France, as everyone knew, was in the hands of the Socialists and the Socialists would refuse to fight! A striking example indeed of the illusion—both as to the strength of parties and as to the innermost thoughts of men—into which blind pride had led the most highly-trained, most methodical and most self-confident machine the world has ever known. The Kaiser—whose uncle Edward VII once dubbed "the bold coward" in my hearing—found solace in this illusion which stilled his morbid hesitations. It deprived the German people of the only brake which might perhaps have checked them on their warlike course. Believing no obstacle stood in the path of her conquering destiny, Germany thirsted for war and was ready to throw herself into it on a sign from above.

Such the contrast, on the eve of Armageddon, between two national characters: France seeking peaceful development by her well-ordered genius for liberty; Germany, to use M. Clemenceau's virile words, "enslaving herself to enslave." The time was at hand once more for the onslaught of the "Alamans" on the "Franks." All Germany—herein lies the magnitude of her crime—was psycho-

Digitized by Google

logically ready for war, even for war of aggression. The day its masters called, Germany would rise as one man!

III

In the autumn of 1911, Germany passes from decisions to acts. The Imperial budgets record them. The figures throw light upon the facts.

For twenty months, laws of aggression follow one another in quick succession. I have told what France did in 1905 and 1908 to reduce her military charges. Germany will reply to this reduction by an increase of her own. Yet she is already ahead of us. From 1902 to 1913, she spent 104 per cent. more on armament than did France: 2,200 millions as against 980 millions. Her military expenditures always exceeded ours—by 121 millions in 1902, by 306 millions in 1906 (they will exceed them by 800 millions in 1914). From 1900 to 1910, the head of every German family has paid 25 per cent. more towards the upkeep of the Army than the head of every French family. Taking the increase of military expenditure of the six great European powers between 1883 and 1913 we find the following percentages:

France	70%
Italy	108%
Austria	111%
Russia	114%
England	153%
Germany	227%

It is in these circumstances that a first law is voted in 1911, under guise of technical improvements, entailing however an increase of 20,000 men in the regular Army and an expenditure of 167 millions. Ten months later in 1912, a second law is passed tending to keep the regular Army constantly on a footing so nearly that of war that an attack can be launched in a few hours, and providing for new units, the creation of two new Army Corps, fifty bat-

Digitized by Google

talions of technical troops, an increase of the regular Army by 40,000 men and an expenditure of 650 millions. This second law is hardly promulgated than a third is introduced and passed. This time the increase is 70,000 men a year, or for any Army serving two years a total addition of 140,000 bringing the total effectives of the regular Germany Army up to 900,000. This was a costly operation. It meant a capital expenditure of 1,250 million francs and an annual charge of 275 millions.

That alone should suffice to demonstrate the plan of aggression, but here is proof decisive. These burdens, which Germany imposes upon herself, coincide with a financial situation which makes them, if not impossible, at least very hard to bear. At the very time when within a space of thirty months the Imperial Government has burdened itself with a capital expenditure of nearly 1,500 millions and an additional annual expenditure of nearly 1,000 millions, its budget is in deficit of 550 million marks for 1911-1912. For three years it has been seeking fresh taxes but can find none, this vain search having led only to the resignation of the Minister of Finance. The pressure is so great that it is decided to resort to an exceptional tax on capital, justifying it by recalling 1813, the very mention of which in itself throws light upon the situation, the secret intention and the future plan. Placed side by side with its financial policy, the military policy of Germany assumes its full meaning. To the huge gaps in the budget, others are added with no sure means of filling either. Why? Because Germany is already determined to throw the sword into the balance and call upon her "national industry" to restore her finances. Like the gambler who, when the game is up, pulls his gun.

The hypocritical search for pretexts begins at once. France, alarmed at the disparity between her Army of 450,000 men and that of 900,000 which the laws of 1911, 1912 and 1913 assure to Germany, votes the three years service and a slight increase in armaments. Immediately the Pan-German Press denounces this "provocation." I can still

Digitized by Google

hear Baron von Stumm, who had been pleased till then to play at conciliation, remarking dryly during a dinner at the Dutch Legation in July, 1913, that, "If France presumes to challenge Germany's right to be stronger than she is, it must be that she desires war." Ludendorff, then a colonel, draws up a report on the methods to be pursued in arousing national enthusiasm and shifting the responsibilities: He writes:

The people must be made to believe that our armaments are an answer to the armaments and to the policy of France. They must be accustomed to the thought that an aggressive war by us is necessary to meet the provocations of our enemies. We must act with prudence to awaken no suspicion.

Moltke, assuming humanitarian airs, deplores the reigning spirit of unrest and says to the King of the Belgians that "it must be put an end to." Put an end to? And this is how according to Ludendorff's report:

In the next European war, the small nations must be forced to follow us or they must be crushed.

Under certain conditions their armies and their fortresses can be rapidly reduced or neutralized,—which would probably be the case with Belgium and Holland—so as to shut out our enemy in the West from territories which could be used as a base for operations against our flank.

This will be a vital question for us. Our aim must always be to take the offensive with greatly superior forces from the very start.

In order to do so, we shall have to concentrate a great army, followed by strong formations of landwehr which would force the armies of the small nations to follow us or remain inactive in the theatre of war,—or would crush them in case of armed resistance.

From now on, the military leaders are not alone in the secret of this aggressive plan. The Governments of the German States are informed that France is to be attacked through Belgium. The Bavarian Legation at Berlin, in a report which Kurt Eisner made public, wrote:

Digitized by Google

Germany cannot respect Belgian neutrality. The Chief of the General Staff has declared that even English neutrality would be too high a price to pay for respecting that of Belgium. For an offensive war against France is possible only through Belgium.

The plan decided upon and the sword ready, there remains only an opportunity to find. The assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand furnishes it; and less than five weeks will suffice to bring about the explosion. Everything is ready and in its place; everything is prepared so that no possibility of averting war remains. Here again we have German proofs to present in the opening pages of this book on France and Peace. Not forgetting the Kaiser's letter to his Chancellor of July 28, 1914, in which William II demands the occupation of Belgrade by Austria-Hungary—war with Russia in other words—here is Bethmann-Hollweg's Note of August 3 in which he says:

We were aware that the eventual acts of hostility by Austria against Serbia might bring Russia on the scene and drag us into a war in conjunction with our Ally.

But we could not, knowing that the vital interests of Austria were at stake, either advise our Ally to a condescension incompatible with her dignity, or refuse her our support at this difficult juncture.

The confession is full: it was needless. For events speak for themselves and in the fatal week show Germany as eager to avoid the maintenance of peace as her future adversaries were to safeguard it. Not only Germany does nothing that, as Count Brockdorff-Rantzau expresses it in his Memorandum of May 29, 1916, "would have prevented the Austro-Hungarian Government from taking irrevocable decisions," but she systematically neglects every opportunity of avoiding war which France, Great Britain and even Russia offer her. She supports neither M. Sazonow's request for an extension of time to Serbia for her answer, nor the Czar's suggestion that the controversy should be submitted to the Hague Court of Arbitration; nor his pro-

Digitized by Google

posal to refrain from all military acts of a threatening nature while the conversations are in progress. Far more on July 31, it is Germany who exerts pressure on hesitating Austria to precipitate the latter's action. The same day, it is Germany who instructs its Ambassador at St. Petersburg to take the irreparable step which is to plunge the world into war.

Here, once more but no less damning, is the conclusive German and Austro-Hungarian evidence. Prince Lichnowsky, German Ambassador at the Court of St. James, referring to his Government, writes: "The war was helped on." Count Szoeggeny, Austrian Ambassador at Berlin, as early as July 25 summarizes his information as follows: "Delay in beginning military operations is looked upon here as a great danger, on account of the intervention of other Powers. We are urgently advised to begin immediately and to place the world in the presence of a *fait accompli.*" The same Ambassador on July 27 declares himself charged by the German Minister of Foreign Affairs to acquaint the Austro-Hungarian Government that, if Germany is obliged by courtesy to transmit to Vienna a British offer of mediation, she is on the other hand "absolutely opposed to the consideration of any such proposal."

Finally it is the Bavarian Minister in Berlin who, two weeks before the declaration of war, reveals on July 18 Germany's diabolical plan in all its details: This document demonstrates how an ambition can bring about the death of millions of men:

The step upon which the Cabinet of Vienna has decided at Belgrade and which will consist of the sending of a Note will be taken on the 25th inst.

The postponement of this action to that date is explained by the wish to await the departure of MM. Poincaré and Viviani from St. Petersburg, in order to make it more difficult for the Powers of the Entente to agree upon a counter-proposal.

Until then pacific sentiments will be simulated at Vienna and to

Digitized by Google

this end the Minister of War and the Chief of the General Staff will both be given leave of absence at the same time.

An efficacious action has, on the other hand, been exercised on the newspapers and on the stock-exchange.

It is recognized in Berlin that the Austro-Hungarian Government has acted skilfully. The only complaint made is that Count Tiza who was probably at first opposed to strong methods has partly disclosed the plan in his speech to the Chamber.

And after summarizing the terms of the ultimatum to be sent to Serbia, the Bavarian Minister adds:

For the acceptance of these demands a delay of forty-eight hours will be granted.

It is clear that Serbia cannot accept these demands which are incompatible with her dignity as a Sovereign State. The consequence will therefore be war. In Berlin they are altogether of opinion that Austria should take advantage of the favourable moment even if there is danger of ulterior complications.

They believe that Austria's hour of destiny has struck and in consequence to the question presented by the Austro-Hungarian Government they replied without hesitation that they agreed upon any action which the latter may decide upon, even if a war with Russia is to result.

Bismarck, on a like occasion, had forged the telegram from Ems,—child's play compared to this. Furthermore it is not the end, and for the carrying out of the plan we shall see reproduced the same trickery which marked its preparation. France, to avoid any incident, has withdrawn its frontier forces ten kilometers from the border. Germany, on the first and second of August, before any declaration of war, takes advantage of this to violate French and Belgian territory as she had already violated the territory of Luxemburg. To justify her action she accuses French aviators of having thrown bombs on the railroad near Nuremberg. On April 3, 1916, the municipal authorities of that city, in accord with the district military authorities, will declare that all reports published on this subject are "manifestly false," and three years later Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, confessing the lie in turn, will merely express the

Digitized by Google

regret that Germany, in declaring war upon France, "should have unwittingly made use of information which it had not had time to verify."

....The Armies are in contact. I have shown France patient and without fault, Germany, eager for the fray, prepared to herald the Dawn of Blood. All Germany, on August 2, 1914, is up and ready for the work of death. The Imperial Chancellor—mediocre though he be—has risen without effort to the level of German tradition to lay down the principle of "Necessity" and in consequence to assert: "We were obliged to disregard the justified protests of Belgium and Luxemburg." The Reichstag's answer? A unanimous vote of approval! Liebknecht himself—who will repent only later—is at one with Reventlow. The entire *Socialdemokratie* suddenly discovers on this national occasion that it has a Pan-German soul. Nor does it take pains to "verify reports." Light-heartedly it breaks the pledge which its envoy Muller had brought to the French Socialists on July 31; it wipes away the kiss of Judas which in Brussels on the same day Haase had given to Jaurès.

Psychological unanimity, the elements of which I have analyzed, transforms itself into unanimous action. All, conservatives and liberals alike, hope for a quick solution: France crushed in three weeks; *"nach Paris"* realized by the violation of Belgian neutrality; an easy counter-blow against Russia, and then against England who has entered into the business for "a scrap of paper." No German doubts success, nor questions the means employed. At this hour and for this work, national unanimity is complete. War—brief war, cruel war, fruitful war—is the national programme. No one resists the temptation. Collective hypnosis transforms the crime against Right and against Humanity into a duty. Seventy million Germans claim from their leaders a full share of their responsibility.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

THE WAR AND THE ARMISTICE

ALL her Allies have paid tribute to the greatness of the part played by France in the war. Geography and history alike ordained it. The violation of Belgian neutrality deprived France of the only guarantee which was hers by international law. For weeks and months, she was the sole protection of the western Powers. Had France been beaten at the Marne, the world would have fallen under the German yoke. By her victory she saved it.

If France was able to play so great a part, it was due to the extraordinary union into which the German aggression had welded her whole people in a few hours, and to the military virtues displayed by her eight million soldiers all through the atrocious strain imposed by fifty-two months of invasion. When the troop trains left to carry her forces to the frontier, men's souls were stirred by passionate love for France, passionate longing for justice and passionate confidence in victory. War declared by Germany stunned France for a moment and then aroused her wrath. The whole nation revolted at the thought of its long patience so ill rewarded. It rose strong in the justice of its cause. The proud spirit of France awoke. *Puisqu'il fallait y aller, on irait* and with how whole a heart. France would for ever have shrunk from the responsibility of war. War forced by aggression upon a free people, strong in their own right—that was something for which men could die.

The troop trains passed bedecked with flowers. On them was chalked the slogan *"à Berlin"* and from them hung in effigy figures capped with spiked helmets. Beneath the August sun bare-chested artillerymen lovingly

Digitized by Google

caressed their guns and bandied jest and laughter with the comely maidens who flocked to the stations to cheer them. Thus after a fortnight of concentration we started for Belgium. We said of the Germans, "Where are they?" We sought the enemy. Surely we should soon find him. In the compact villages of the Borinage and in the thickets of Belgian Luxemburg the shock came. By evening a great silence had fallen over our decimated regiments. We had thrown ourselves in the open against an enemy we had not yet learned to know. Now we knew. Machine guns concealed in cellers had mowed down our columns. Heavy artillery hidden away in the folds of the Hauts-Faings had overwhelmed our lines with murderous high explosives. Barbed wire and trenches had proved too much for our valour. France's furious onslaught had been broken by German stratagems.

Then came the day of the retreat. Retreat? Whither? For what reason? No one knew. Retreat with all its physical strain, with all its moral strain far harder to bear! Effort without enthusiasm; weariness of soul added to weariness of body. At times the order came for us to stand and fight. The old spirit returned. On the Meuse and at Guise the enemy paid the price of such awakenings. But at nightfall our victorious troops, their confidence restored, heard once more the order to retire. To win and to withdraw. To win and leave the field of battle after having driven Germans from it was cruel and refined torture, hardest of all for Frenchmen. Not once but again and again it was inflicted upon us. We got so that we could no longer reason. We felt that we were following the funeral of France along endless roads leading drearily towards the south. On September 5, an order was read calling on us to attack. We listened, but faith was lacking. We said to one another. "We are going to attack to-morrow morning. We shall win, but to-morrow night we shall again withdraw."

We fought furiously nevertheless to vent upon the Boche the rage that was in our hearts. We kept it up that

Digitized by Google

evening—then through the night—then through the next day! We were very weary, but we were no longer retreating! After two days, we found that we were advancing. At first no one believed it. How could the soldier understand? But soon the joy of making headway spread through the ranks—we *were* advancing. Of that there could be no doubt. So we "had" them. *En avant!* In fagged and silent columns, we passed through villages and over plains. Victory was ours! Victory born in pain, in toil, in doubt! It was only later that we understood! The idea of Victory pieced itself together bit by bit, as we pushed the enemy back to the north. We had been told to die where we stood rather than give way. We had been asked nothing more. But of a sudden as we fought we felt within our grasp the fickle Goddess of Victory who for three weeks had eluded us. We had been the Army of Illusions. We had been the Army of Retreat. From now on, we were the Army of Confidence. The name of Joffre was in the hearts of his soldiers.

But before reaching the end, we had more than four years to wait. At first we had hoped it would be only a few weeks. After the Marne, Ypres, a titanic struggle less known but not less great, had strengthened our hopes. We expected to leave the trenches in the spring. It was the first winter. We thought it would be the only one and bore it as a short and nasty test of our patience. Four winters instead of one passed. As early as 1915, the men in the trenches realized that it would go on like this so long as strength of material was not added to the strength of numbers and courage. The men higher up were slower to understand. We attacked often. We never broke through. Neither did the enemy. We lived face to face, rifle in hand, between attacks. There were local engagements in 1915. Then came 1916 and Verdun. Verdun, the supreme test after so many tests—Verdun, where, as at the Marne, France saved the world on land as the British fleet saved it on the seas. Once more Germany believed she could force the road to Paris. Six months of carnage

Digitized by Google

closed it to her. Our defensive victory made possible Italian success in Galicia and Bukowina; made possible the coming in of Roumania, so ill exploited; made possible the counter-offensive on the Somme, the first which inspired Ludendorff with fear of the future. Verdun did something more. Verdun won the fight for material and after two years hammered into bureaucratic brains the long ignored but sovereign importance of rapid-fire. From Verdun dates the beginning of intensive output without which final victory would have been impossible.

Truly was it long! The loophole through which one peered at the ragged sandbags of a Boche trench; the firing bank where one sat in the mud while a comrade watched; the icy water in which one's feet froze; the slimy shelter where straw rotted; the fatigue duty and the trench work; the bringing up of grenades and grub; then billets in desolated villages; inspections and reviews; all the burdens of barrack life,—such with death at the end was the lot of all—officers and men alike. In 1917, an offensive—badly prepared and badly directed, both by the High Command and by the Government,—for the first time brings discouragement and disquiet into our ranks. Pétain, the saviour of Verdun, restores order in men's souls. He gives back to us that Admirable Army of national sacrifice in which officers and men are ready to die for one another. Time hangs heavy. But we feel new things stirring in the air. A menace; that of the onslaught of enemy troops released by the Russian revolution. A hope; that of a mighty young nation which beyond the seas is getting ready to bear its share of battle. Our energies grow taut. Our hearts take on new courage. We feel the thrill of moral force added to material force. The year 1918 begins. Once again, in this last year as in the first the French Army is to save the day. Twenty-four of Pétain's divisions are hurled into the gap caused by the German thrust against Gough's Army. Two months later, the French Army in turn, taken by surprise at the Chemin des Dames, is thrown back to the Marne. This danger

Digitized by Google

overcome, our troops are at a fighting edge. National in spirit as in origin, the French Army has acquired the technical qualities of professional armies. It has experience, it has self-possession, it has adaptability and it has science. It is ready for the war of movement now inaugurated by the fluctuations of the battle front. The lack of training from which so many troops suffered at the start has disappeared. War material is in abundance. Confidence reigns. The stern and serious spirit of war is at its height. It is no longer as in 1914 an army of heroic youth rushing light-hearted into danger. It is an army of men—for youth matures rapidly in the school of war—who do their duty calmly and do it to the end. It is the Army of Victory.

France behind the lines was worthy of fighting France. She furnished in full measure that effort without which the heroism of her soldiers would have been vain. She too did her full duty. When war began—the first great European war in forty-three years—both France and Germany had to face the surprise of fire: our 75's inflicted losses on the Germans which their General Staff had not foreseen. Their heavy artillery for months smashed the morale of our Armies. To tell the truth no one was really ready—France even less than Germany—to meet the demands a successful war of artillery was going to make. Our manual of attack in 1913 said: "Ground is won by infantry." Three years later our experience dearly bought proclaimed: "Ground is won by artillery." Both perhaps were exaggerations, but the fact remains none the less that the French Army lacked the support in attack and the protection in defense which quick-firing heavy artillery affords and that its field artillery perfect in design was woefully short of ammunition. When we went to war, we had 1,300 rounds per gun, later on there were days when the expenditure was 4,000 rounds per gun. We had counted on a production of 15,000 three-inch shells a day and the total expenditure on certain days reached 400,000. In 1916, to demolish a yard of enemy trench, it

Digitized by Google

took 407 kilogrammes of "75" shells, 203 kilogrammes of trench shells, 704 kilogrammes of heavy shells and 128 kilogrammes of high explosive shells. The lessons of battle obliged us first to keep our field artillery supplied, then to create quick firing heavy batteries. A doubly onerous task in almost impossible circumstances. All our iron and steel plants were near our frontiers, and invasion had robbed us of them! The Germans estimated that our loss in this way would be 60,000 workmen out of 112,000, 40 per cent. of our coal, 80 per cent. of our coke, 90 per cent. of our iron, 70 per cent. of our pig iron, 80 per cent. of our steel, 80 per cent. of our machinery. The estimate was correct. What did we do?

The story of this prodigious effort has never been written. We had, in 1914, 3,696 pieces of 75. Despite loss and destruction, we had 6,555 when hostilities ceased. As to heavy artillery, the supply rose from 288 pieces in 1914 to 5,477 in 1918. In other words, we increased our field artillery by 77 per cent. and our heavy artillery by 1,943 per cent. One-tenth of this latter increase was obtained by reconstruction of old pieces, nine-tenths by new construction. All our artillery combined in 1914 had less than five million shells. The monthly output at the end of the war exceeded nine millions.

So much for round figures. Now for details. In 1914, the production of 75's was negligible and there was no regular service of repair. In October, 1918, our workshops were turning out, for this caliber alone, 550 new tubes and 573 repaired, 593 new brakes and 195 repaired, 267 new carriages and 114 repaired. To these must be added shells, more shells and ever more shells. The battle of Champagne and Artois in 1915, lasting two months, cost us seven and a half million 75 shells—an average of 121,000 a day. The battle of Verdun and the Somme in 1916—lasting ten months—cost us more than forty-three million 75 shells—an average of 144,000 a day. The offensive of 1918, lasting four months, cost us nearly thirty-three million shells, an average of 272,500 a day. We met this increasing expendi-

Digitized by Google

ture. The output of 75 shells at the beginning of the war was theoretically 13,000 a day, as a matter of fact it was 6,000. It rose to 150,000 a day in October, 1915,—to 173,000 in August, 1916,—to 203,000 in the following November, to 233,000 in May, 1917, which level is maintained and even exceeded to the end of the war. This increase of production—3,782 per cent.—was obtained under almost hopeless conditions brought about by invasion. It is to the everlasting honour of our Government, of our Parliament and of our industry that they were able to achieve it, in spite of everything.

But to the first weapon, the 75—the use of which was developed so tremendously,—it was necessary to add the war weapons of modern warfare, the 105, 155 short, 155 long, 220, 270, 280, 370, 420. Here everything had to be built up from the bottom. Up to the very eve of war, experts had discussed the question of quick firing heavy artillery in scientific papers to no result. When war broke out, we had 104 pieces of quick firing 155's—and that was all. But follow the expenditure from battle to battle: Champagne and Artois in 1915 (two months) cost us 510,000 rounds of 155, or 8,500 a day, and 5,400 rounds of 220, or 900 a day. Verdun and the Somme in 1916 (ten months) cost us 5,280,000 rounds of 155, or 17,600 a day, and 413,000 rounds of 220, or 1,343 a day. The Aisne in 1917 (two months) cost us 2,700,000 rounds of 155, or 45,000 a day, and 237,000 rounds of 220, or 3,900 a day. For the offensive of 1918, the expenditure reached 6,530,000 rounds of 155 or 54,416 a day. I sum up these figures in the following table.

DAILY EXPENDITURE OF AMMUNITION

		75	*155*	*220*
Champagne and Artois.....	1915	121,000	8,500	900
Verdun and the Somme.....	1916	144,000	17,600	1,343
Aisne	1917	265,000	45,000	3,900
Offensive of	1918	272,500	54,416	....

Digitized by Google

This heavy expenditure of heavy shells, as in the case of the 75's, was completely covered by production. The daily output of 155's, which did not even exist in September, 1914, had grown to 3,600 in September, 1915, to 30,000 in October, 1916, to 39,000 in July, 1918. The output of 220's rose from 460 in September, 1915, to 2,100 in September, 1916, and to 3,400 in April, 1917. The total increase was 3,782 per cent. for the 75's, was 983 per cent. for the 155's, and 639 per cent. for the 220's. And all this, I repeat and insist, was after invasion had robbed us of about 85 per cent. of our pre-war iron and steel metallurgic resources.

The following table gives the daily productions:

DAILY PRODUCTION OF MUNITIONS

	75	*155*	*220*
Third Quarter of 1914.....	6,000	.....	....
Third Quarter of 1915.....	150,000	3,600	460
Last Quarter of 1916.....	203,000	30,000	2,100
End of War, June 1917 to Nov. 1918.	233,000	39,000	3,400

If we take into account other sizes than the 75, the 155 and the 220, we have during the last period of the war, a total daily production of 330,000 shells, and for the entire war a total production of 300 million projectiles.

I do not want to prolong this enumeration. Let me merely add that, in September, 1914, our Armies had 140 aeroplanes in action and that in October, 1918, they had 3,609; that at the beginning of the war, we were producing 62 a month and at the end 2,068. I note that in December, 1916, we had 8 tanks and on the day of the Armistice 3,400. Finally, let me emphasize the point that this production for the needs of the French Army did not exhaust our manufacturing capacity, for we furnished our various Allies with 7,000 guns, 10,663 aeroplanes, and 400 tanks. Thus, after three and a half years of war and invasion, we were able to lend the splendid American Army that assistance without which their entry into action might have

Digitized by Google

been indefinitely delayed. Not to mention the 2,500 officers, the 25 instruction camps, and the 135,000 hospital beds placed at their disposal, we furnished the Americans with 4,000 guns, 4,000 aeroplanes, 240 tanks. On the day of the Armistice, of the U. S. Army's war material then in line, France had manufactured 100 per cent. of the 75's, 100 per cent. of the 155's, howitzers, 100 per cent. of the tanks, 81 per cent. of the aeroplanes, 75 per cent. of the long guns. All of the 65 million rounds of 75 and 155 shells used by the American artillery came from French factories. Of the 14 million tons of supplies which they used in Europe, half, or 7 millions, came from France.

Such was our material contribution. What of our contribution in man power? Despite her low birth rate France did not hesitate before the mortality of war and—by means of a Spartan system of mobilization—always kept her forces up to the maximum.

3,781,000 men in August, 1914.
4,978,000 men in July, 1915.
4,677,000 men in July, 1916.
4,327,000 men in September, 1917.
4,143,000 men in November, 1918.

In November, 1918, we had 362,000 more men in line than in 1914, and yet our losses from the beginning had been 2,594,000 men—1,364,000 killed, 740,000 severely wounded, and 490,000 prisoners. Throughout the war, we bore the brunt of the enemy's attacks on the Western front. We held three-fourths of this front up to the spring of 1917. At that time the British Army was facing 42 German divisions, the French Army 82. Our line reduced about this time by 50 kilometers, was increased by another 80 kilometers after the German push on General Gough's Army in March, 1918. Up to the war of movement in 1918, the German Army always maintained its maximum density on the Western front—1,293 battalions out of 1,692 in November, 1914; 1,456 battalions out of 2,316 in February, 1917, and it was always the French sector that bore

Digitized by Google

the brunt of the burden on the Western front. If, for example, taking the first 35 months of the war (August, 1914, to August, 1917) and the number of enemy battalions in line, we figure the total German strength deployed as 4 on the Belgian front, it was 8 on the British front, 22 on the Russian front and 35 on the French front.

I have told our industrial effort and our human sacrifice. There remains the story of our French genius. I am not one of those small-minded Frenchmen who believe that, in order to be great, France must needs be ungrateful. I have always said that France could not have won without her Allies. And I have always counted on our Allies' sense of justice to recognize that without France they could not have waged the war. Have I not the right to add that besides her contribution in war material and her contribution in man power, France made the splendid contribution of her genius? The war full of surprises was pregnant with its own lesson. Success came to those who from this lesson were able to unriddle their course of action. No cut-and-dried doctrine stood the test of events. The doctrine of the war shaped itself from day to day in the turmoil of accumulated happenings, reserving the crown of victory to him who could coordinate its ever changing demands. But whether for artillery—strategic plans, barrage fire, plunging fire, liaison, range-finding, signalling; whether for infantry; transformation of equipment, specialization of missions, organization of terrain, accompanying aviation, acceleration of reliefs, attacks by infiltration; passage through the lines, defense by withdrawal to second line positions,—France during the whole war was the laboratory of the Powers. Nothing was more natural; for under the cruel stress of defeat we had more deeply studied these problems. How could one not recall that it was a French mind that conceived and carried out the strategic plan which led to final victory; that substituted for local and intermittent attacks which had wasted both sides for four years the general and continuous attack along the whole front? How could one not write here the name of Marshal

Digitized by Google

Foch? Von Kluck said in 1914, "I have failed to take Paris, but they will never take Vouziers." They continued to fail to take Paris. But we took Vouziers. Ludendorff notwithstanding, French genius triumphed over German brains!

French genius triumphed not only on the field of battle but in the conception and organization of war. It was from France that went forth the first and most pressing appeals for that military and economic unity of command which, in 1918, turned the long-wavering scales in favour of the Allies. From the end of 1916, the French Parliament had made insistence upon unity of command the essential article of its programme. On October 5, 1917, M. Loucheur, Minister of Armament in the Painlevé Cabinet, had secured its endorsement by the French War Committee. Several weeks later, not without hesitation on the part of Great Britain, the War Council of Versailles was created. It was a step forward. But that was not enough. As soon as he assumed the reins of government in November, 1917, M. Clemenceau set to work to obtain more and better. I had informed him that he could count on President Wilson's aid. On the other hand opposition was still manifest in London and when during a brief stay in Paris at the end of 1917 I publicly declared that the American and French Governments were agreed on the necessity of a unity of command, several English newspapers protested. On the eve of my departure for New York, on December 30, 1917, I had a last talk with M. Clemenceau. I said to him:

"They are going to talk to me again over there about unity of command. And no doubt they will ask me, 'Who?' What shall I say?"

M. Clemenceau replied: "Foch."

Three months after, in the last week of March, 1918, the British Army commanded by General Gough was broken and flung back on Amiens. On March 23, the bombardment of Paris by long range guns began. The breaking of the Franco-British front brought us back to the darkest days of 1914. From the very first moment of the

Digitized by Google

crisis, M. Clemenceau's mind was made up. From the extremity of the danger he would snatch the solution sought in vain for so many months. To German unity of command he would oppose Allied unity of command.

I have told above how on March 26, General Pétain sent up twenty-four divisions to fill the gap created between our Allies and ourselves. At four o'clock, the same day after a meeting held at Marshal Pétain's headquarters at Compiegne between MM. Poincaré, Clemenceau and Loucheur who had motored from Paris with General Foch and Lord Milner representing Great Britain, it had been decided to discuss the question at another conference the next day. Who would be present at the conference? M. Clemenceau at once designated Marshal Foch. It was later decided that General Pétain would come also. After the meeting M. Clemenceau took Lord Milner aside. He begged him insistently to bring to bear on Sir Douglas Haig all the pressure of his great authority in support of a reorganization of the Allied command. The battle of Amiens was at stake. Lord Milner promised his assistance.

On March 26, everybody met at Doullens. While General Haig was talking with Generals Byng and Plumer, MM. Poincaré, Clemenceau and Loucheur were in the Place du Marché with General Foch. The latter, in rapid and vigorous sentences, outlined the situation and the reasons for not giving way to despair. He said:

"We will not withdraw. We will fight where we are. We must not indicate a line of retreat, or everyone will take it. We must hang on—we must hold fast. We must not give up another metre of ground. Remember October, 1914."

M. Clemenceau listens. He mutters:

"C'est un bougre!"

Minutes fly,—everyone waits around eating sandwiches taken from General Pétain's car. At noon Lord Milner arrives. Again very briefly M. Clemenceau talks to him —one feels what he is saying—and Milner goes in alone to General Haig with whom he talks ten minutes. At twenty

Digitized by Google

minutes past twelve the general conference begins. After a statement of the situation in which by his clarity and confidence General Foch wins the admiration of all, the measures to be adopted for the organization of the command before Amiens are taken up. It is at this moment that General Haig pronounces the following words—I cite textually from the notes of one who was present—the echo of his conversation with Lord Milner:

"If General Foch will consent to give his advice, I shall be very glad to follow it."

There is no question yet of unity of command. M. Clemenceau is not satisfied. He rises and takes Lord Milner off to a corner of the room; then General Pétain; then General Foch. These are brief *à parté* talks, in which short words are exchanged. The idea is suggested to attach General Foch to General Pétain and entrust him with liaison with the British.

M. Clemenceau answers sharply:

"That's not what we are talking about! What Foch needs is an independent post from which he can control."

General Pétain, a fine soldier, interjects at once:

"Everything you decide will be well done."

Then M. Clemenceau sits down again. He takes pencil and paper. He writes, and as he writes he reads aloud. He uses first the formula which everyone has used since the morning to define the battle which had to be won before Amiens:

"General Foch is charged by the British and French Governments with coordinating the British and French operations before Amiens."

Here General Foch stops the President:

"Better make it on the Western front."

M. Clemenceau answers:

"Of course you are right!"

And he scratches out the last words for which he substitutes "on the Western front." Then he goes on:

Digitized by Google

"He (General Foch) will come to an understanding to this effect with the two Commanders-in-Chief who are invited to furnish him with all necessary information."

It is now past one o'clock. Everybody goes to lunch together at the old Doullens Hotel *Les Quatre Fils Aymon.* On the threshold of the dining-room, M. Loucheur, who sees success in sight for the idea he had supported before the War Council on the previous fifth of October and who formerly as an artillery lieutenant had served under the orders of the new "co-ordinator," meets the latter and says laughingly:

"Well, General, so you have got your paper now?"

General Foch, laughing back, says:

"Yes, and a fine time to give it me."

Lunch is quickly over, and forty minutes later General Foch leaves for British Headquarters at Dury to take up his task. His task, the most difficult of all tasks, despite the burning desire of all to succeed and to stop the enemy's advance. For military life, with its simple formulæ of command and obedience, lends itself reluctantly to combinations of this kind which are outside its normal sphere. For several weeks—as was inevitable—General Foch "coordinated more by negotiation than by command." Racing from one Headquarters to another—advising—suggesting—insisting—at times even hustling—he gained inch by inch the theoretic authority with which, thanks to M. Clemenceau, the crisis of March 26 had endowed him. More was needed. A few days later M. Clemenceau accompanied by M. Loucheur met Generals Foch, Fayolle, and Debeney at Breteuil in the Oise. It was agreed that the situation was improved. Then M. Clemenceau said to General Foch.

"You are doing very good work. But you do not command enough. I have just come from Haig. I have talked with him. I want you to go the whole hog and give orders."

On April 3, a new conference enabled M. Clemenceau

Digitized by Google

to secure for his point of view the seal of official sanction. General Foch carries away from the conference a new paper which is an actual brevet of command. There is no longer any question of coordination. Henceforth General Foch is to have "the strategic direction of military operations on the Western front." The Commanders-in-Chief of each of the Allied nations are to retain "the tactical conduct of operations" with the right of appeal to their Governments if they deem it necessary. This clear definition despite the restriction mentioned has a most satisfactory effect. All the Commanders-in-Chief show the utmost will to obey and cooperate.

The front stiffens and hope again runs high. But on May 27, there is a new catastrophe; the Chemin des Dames. The French front had broken. Our troops are thrown back to the Marne. It is a bad start for unity of command. On June 2, M. Clemenceau in the Chamber defends it absolutely in the face of the most violent criticism. He says:

> These soldiers, these splendid soldiers have leaders, excellent leaders, great leaders—leaders worthy of them in every respect...
>
> I shall reassert this as often as I have to, to make myself heard, because it is my duty, because I have seen these leaders at work.
>
> These men are now fighting the hardest battle of the war and are fighting it with a heroism which I can find no words worthy to express.
>
> And shall we—for a mistake which may have been made in such or such a sector, or even may not have been made at all—shall we, before even knowing, demand explanations! Shall we, while the battle is raging, go to a man who is worn out, a man so tired that his head droops over his maps as I have seen in awful moments, and ask this man why on such and such a day he did such or such a thing?
>
> Drive me from this tribute if that is what you ask—For I will not do it.

Not satisfied with continuing his full support to the man he had picked out from the very first months of the war, M. Clemenceau continues his effort to increase this man's authority. On June 26 he decides that the right given at

Digitized by Google

Beauvais to the Allied Commanders-in-Chief to appeal to their Governments shall be abolished as far as the French Armies are concerned and that their Commander-in-Chief shall be purely and simply placed under the orders of General Foch. On June 30, complying with a desire frequently and forcefully expressed by the latter, he removes the Chief of Staff of the French Armies and appoints General Buat to this post. In August, M. Clemenceau suggests to the Cabinet the elevation of the Commander-in-Chief to the dignity of Marshal of France. Thus, from the first day to the last, a single thought had dominated the actions of the French Government. From the first day to the last, France and her Prime Minister had willed the unity of command realized in the person of the great soldier whose unquestioned genius ensured its acceptance. History will tell how great the part played in our common victory by this decision to which all our Allies adhered.

I should be woefully remiss if I did not add one more word. I have spoken of French genius. But France is also great of heart. This it was that made our brotherhood of arms. Forty-three per cent. of all the men of France were mobilized. Thus our military commanders governed half of our male population. They governed them with tender care. They were sparing of their soldiers' lives. They took full advantage of the increasing potentialities of modern engines of war. At Charleroi and the Marne we lost 5.41 per cent. of the forces engaged; during the first six months of 1915, 2.39 per cent.; during the second six months, 1.68 per cent.; during the first six months of 1916, 1.47 per cent., and during the last six months of the same year, 1.28 per cent. Our losses fell in 1917 to .46 per cent. of the forces engaged and in 1918 in our final effort they did not exceed .75 per cent. A splendid showing indeed. But this is not all. France more than any other country, despite the demands of her war industry and thanks to a firm and just policy, maintained a high percentage of her fighting men in the divisions in line—86 per cent. in 1914, and 74 per cent. in 1918. France also had the secret of inspiring

Digitized by Google

mutual affection between her officers and men. France understood—and here again in justice I must write the name of Marshal Pétain—that a democracy in arms fighting a five-year war is undeserving of the rigid discipline that can be imposed upon a professional army fighting a five-months war. France understood the inestimable value of mutual sacrifice whereby officers and men are welded together; of "that subtle bond which makes of discipline a personal and a living thing, consciously or instinctively accepted out of gratitude or admiration or love—a bond the more binding because unforced and forged in the heart of the soldier." The French Army—thanks to the spiritual union of men and officers; thanks also to her admirable non-coms., sprung from the ranks of the nation, the epic artisans of the victorious effort planned by their leaders—has no need like the German Army of being picked over in order to find shock troops. The French Army remained itself all through the war, adapting itself to successive changes each of which was a fresh test of its endurance.

Just as in 1914, it had been almost the sole bulwark of civilization with its 22 Army Corps, its 26 Reserve Divisions, its 10 Divisions of Cavalry, against the onslaught on an Empire of Prey with a man power of fourteen million men, so to the very end, by the side of its great Allies, the French Army did what it had to do. What praise could be higher? *Puisqu'il fallait y aller, on irait.* This saying of our French peasant—whom I like so many others had the honour of leading into action—magnificently sums up our ideal of war. With it I will end this brief sketch of what France in arms contributed of her own free will to Victory.

II

The Armistice of November 11, 1918, was an unconditional surrender on the part of Germany. This was clear at the time it was signed, in the minds of those who imposed it and of those upon whom it was forced. It was the logical

Digitized by Google

outcome of the military and political history of the four preceding months.

In the first week of July, 1918, Admiral von Hintze—appointed by the Kaiser to be Secretary of State in the Imperial Office of Foreign Affairs—wishing to be accurately informed as to the military situation before taking up his duties, left for the front.

At Avesnes he met General Ludendorff and asked him:

"In the present offensive are you certain to defeat the enemy completely and decisively?"

General Ludendorff replied without hesitation:

"My answer to your question is an unqualified 'Yes.'"

At that moment everything seemed to justify the assurance of the First Quartermaster General of the German Army. In March a lightning stroke had broken General Gough's Army and thrown the Allies back to the gates of Amiens. In May another push had broken the French line at the Chemin des Dames and carried the enemy to the banks of the Marne. The bombardment of Paris was the visible sign of German victory. Thousands of British and French prisoners, to say nothing of enormous stores of war material, had been captured. The German High Command was busy circulating among its troops that this was the final offensive, "the peace offensive." The enemy was powerfully equipped for it: 1,456 battalions—266 more than in 1916—made up a total of 207 divisions. Of these 207 divisions, 130 were in line and 77 in reserve. Of the latter, only twenty recently withdrawn from battle needed refilling. Twenty-six had been reinforced and thirty-one were fresh. Before dawn on July 15 the offensive was launched in the direction of Reims. By the seventeenth it had been halted between our first and second lines. On the eighteenth the Armies of Mangin and Degoutte counter-attacked on the German flank. On the nineteenth the enemy recrossed the Marne. By August 4 they had been thrust over the Vesle. On the eighth, farther north near Amiens, three German Divisions withdrew in disorder, almost routed before the Allied attack began.

Digitized by Google

Note well these events. They mark the beginnings of Victory and Armistice.

On August 13 a numerous company arrives at German General Headquarters at Spa. Besides the Kaiser, there are gathered there the Crown Prince, Field Marshal von Hindenburg and General Ludendorff, Count Von Hertling, Chancellor of the Empire, and Admiral von Hintze, Minister for Foreign Affairs. On the following evening, the Emperor of Austria and his Minister, Count Burian arrive. A Crown Council is to be held on the fourteenth. Late on the thirteenth von Hintze takes General von Ludendorff aside and questions him as he had done a month before on the general situation. Ludendorff replies:

"In July I told you that I was certain by the present offensive of breaking the enemy's will to fight and of forcing them to make peace. Now I am no longer certain of this."

"In that case," asks the Minister, "how do you imagine the war can be continued?"

"We are still able by defensive operations to paralyze the enemy's will to fight and thus bring them little by little to make Peace."

In a word, instead of the crushing triumph counted upon in July, the German High Command now pins its hope of success in the weariness of the Allies. The Crown Council meets the next day and General Ludendorff voices the same attenuated hope.

"A major offensive," he declares, "is no longer possible. We must confine ourselves to a defensive strategy combined with local offensives. Thus we may hope eventually to paralyze the enemy's will to fight."

The Kaiser gives his opinion. It is "to watch for a favourable moment for coming to terms with the enemy." His Chancellor agrees with him, recommending that "steps be taken at the opportune moment to arrive at an understanding." This moment is to be that of "the first success on the Western front." In other words to await developments, without undue haste. Von Hintze, less confident in

Digitized by Google

the success of defensive strategy, asks to be given immediate authority "to initiate the work of peace by diplomatic means." By this he means "a reduction of the war aims heretofore proclaimed." This proposal is unanimously rejected. Marshal Hindenburg declares:

"We shall succeed in maintaining ourselves upon French soil and thus we shall eventually subject the enemy to our will."

So it is no longer a question as it was a month before of *"nach Paris."* But successes in France are still hoped for. They are confident of remaining on French soil. While there they hope to pave the way for negotiations which will lead to an advantageous peace. In consequence, the powers given to von Hintze for the preparation of diplomatic negotiations are strictly limited by "the maintenance of the war aims established in view to victory" and by the expectation of the favourable opportunity which will be created by the next success.*

From August 14 to September 20, events both political and military were to disturb these hopeful expectations. The "local successes" did not come off, on the contrary five times in five weeks the Allied forces advanced. The Franco-British attack which near Amiens throws back the Germans to their old Chaulnes-Ribécourt front. The Franco-British attack which from the eighteenth to the twenty-sixth of August reaches the Bapeaume-Pérrone-Nesles-Noyon line. The Franco-British attack which from August 30 to September 10 throws back the enemy from

---

*The foregoing account makes it unnecessary for me to insist on the legend of "Peace was possible as early as 1917." As is well known, M. Aristide Briand, formerly French Premier, was approached in the middle of 1917 by a Belgian, Baron Coppée with so-called Peace proposals from Baron von Lancken, who bears so heavy a responsibility for the martyrdom of Belgium. M. Aristide Briand, in laying these overtures before M. Ribot who had succeeded him as Premier, appeared to believe that they were serious and would lead to the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine. M. Ribot on the contrary thought that "it was a trap." It is clear from the quotations and facts given above that as late as the beginning of July, 1918, Germany intended to make only a peace with "the maintenance of the war aims established in view to victory," that is to say a peace of annexation and not of restoration. The official evidence of Admiral von Hintze, the Kaiser's foreign Minister, and the documents quoted above settle the question.

Digitized by Google

the Vesle to the Aisne and farther north almost to the Hindenburg line. The Franco-British attack which from September 18 to 22 pierces this line between Cambrai and Saint-Quentin. The Franco-American attack which from September 12 to 15 reduces the St. Mihiel salient. By September 20 the enemy has lost nearly all the ground he had gained from March to June. His forces have severely suffered. He has engaged 163 divisions of which 75 have been in line two or three times. He still has 68 divisions in reserve which is nine less than in June, but of these only 21 are fresh divisions—ten less than in June. To keep up the effectives of these units in the absence of sufficient reinforcements, he has had to break up 16 divisions and use them as replacements.

At the same time political difficulties have begun. On the evening of the fourteenth of August and on the fifteenth, at Spa, the Emperor Charles of Austria and Count Burian, expressed the opinion that direct overtures for peace should be made as soon as possible. We have noted the decisions arrived at by the German Crown Council on the fourteenth. The Kaiser, the Chancellor, the Generals protest against the suggestion of their Allies. They hold that such a step should only be taken later on and that then it should only be taken through neutral channels and not directly. The Austrians departed unconvinced and, on the twenty-first, telegraphed a plan for a direct appeal to the belligerents after having tried to obtain for this plan the support of Bulgaria and Turkey. Excitement runs high in Berlin and at Spa. The discussion continues three weeks. From September 3 to 5, von Hintze and his under Secretary of State, von Stumm, go to Vienna to preach resistance. They seek delay—at least till the German Army shall have finished the strategic withdrawal which is under way. Hindenburg intervenes on the tenth with a telegram disapproving the Austrian plan for a direct appeal "harmful to our arms and to our peoples." On the other hand he accepts "the intervention of a neutral power with a view to an immediate negotiation." Note the change com-

Digitized by Google

pared to the decisions of August 14. Direct proposals of peace will not be made, but a neutral will be asked to suggest it *immediately*. The Austrians persist nevertheless in their idea and on September 13 launch their Note. Germany, at the same time, seeks the neutral who will undertake the mission. The search is long and vain. On September 21, Ludendorff telegraphs from the great General Headquarters that it might be possible to get in touch with the United States. It is a confused and anxious period. Anxiety and confusion are made worse on the twenty-sixth by news that Bulgaria intends to conclude a separate peace. Germany decides to send troops there. But it is already too late and on the twenty-ninth the Bulgarian Armistice is signed at Salonica. Chancellor von Hertling had declared on September 3 at the Council of Ministers:

"We must say to our enemies, 'You see that you cannot beat us....but we are always ready as we have told you unequivocally on several occasions to conclude a peace full of honour.'"

The succession of Allied victories, the Austrian manifestations, the Bulgarian Armistice completely change this situation. Is Germany ready to sue for peace—not offer it? That is how the question now presents itself. Listen to the answer.

This answer comes from a quarter whence even yesterday it was the least expected and in a form which aggravates its astounding nature. It is the first of October. It is one o'clock in the afternoon. General Ludendorff sends for the two liaison officers of the Chancellery at Great General Headquarters, Baron von Grunau and Baron von Lersner, and says to them:

"I beg you to transmit an urgent request with a view to the immediate despatch of our offer of peace. To-day the troops are holding, but one cannot foresee what may happen to-morrow."

Half an hour later at 1:30 P. M. Marshal Hindenburg intervenes, and referring to the report that a new Chancellor will be appointed that evening or the next day, says:

Digitized by Google

"If the formation of the Government remains the least in doubt and is not certain for this evening between seven and eight o'clock, I am of opinion that it is necessary this very night to send our declaration to the foreign Governments."

At two o'clock the liaison officers confirm the preceding declarations. Baron von Grunau adds:

"My impression is that everyone here has lost his 'self-control.'"

He goes off to the Emperor who agrees with him that, in order to take steps for peace, it is necessary to await till the new Government has been formed. But General Ludendorff insists:

"We are still in honourable posture. But our line may be broken through at any moment and then our peace offer will arrive at the most unfavourable moment. I have the sensation of playing a game of Chance. At any moment and at any point, a division may fail in its duty."

At nine o'clock that night, he demands that to the offer of peace shall be added a request for the designation of the point of meeting for the negotiation of the Armistice. He even goes so far as to give the names of the men who will form the Armistice Commission including an Austrian and a Turk. At midnight he reiterates:

"The offer of peace must be transmitted immediately from Berne to Washington. The Army cannot wait another forty-eight hours."

Panic reigns. Events prove this: for the Army, which according to the General "cannot wait another forty-eight hours," will continue to fight without let-up till November 11. This panic seems to be due to three reasons. The first is that the military situation, although not hopeless, is bad. The second is that the Great General Staff, so overbearing three months ago, is anxious to share its responsibility with civilians. The third is that like many Germans the Great General Staff cherishes extraordinary illusions about the

Digitized by Google

terror Germany inspires, the weakness of President Wilson, the divisions among the Allies, and the nature of the terms it will be possible to obtain. Prince Max of Baden—who that very evening had become Chancellor of the Empire and head of a Cabinet chosen with the approval of the Reichstag—receives an avalanche of alarmist telegrams on taking up his duties. He becomes indignant and insists upon getting information before taking action. A representative of the Great General Staff—Major von dem Bussche—explains the situation on October 2. He is less pessimistic than his Chief but reserved and embarrassed, on the whole far from reassuring. Among other things he says:

"The Entente, by attacking along the whole front, obliged us to scatter our reserves. Of the divisions on the Eastern front which were intended for the Western front, seven were immobilized by the events in Bulgaria. The enemy has placed in action a great many more tanks than was expected. The German troops have fought well. But the strength of our battalions has fallen to 540 men—and that despite the breaking up for replacements of 22 divisions, equal to 66 regiments. No reinforcements are in sight. The Allies, on the contrary, thanks to the Americans, are in a position to make good their losses.... The German Army is still strong enough to withstand the enemy for months, to win local successes and to force the Entente to make fresh sacrifices. But the High Command believes, as far as man can judge—there is no longer any possibility of forcing the enemy to make peace."

The Chancellor would like to have at least eight days respite. General Ludendorff, for all answer, demands twice in succession the text of the peace offer. The Chancellor asks questions: "For how long can the Army hold the frontiers? Does the great General Staff expect the front to give way? If so, when? Does it realize that, if peace negotiations are initiated under the pressure of a critical military situation, it may lead to the loss of the

Digitized by Google

Colonies, of Alsace-Lorraine and of the Polish provinces?" To these questions, there is only one reply made, on October 3, under the signature of Marshal Hindenburg who in Berlin on that day sends the following letter to the Chancellor:

The Supreme Command of the Army maintains its demand, formulated on Sunday, September 29, 1918, for an immediate offer of peace to our enemies.

As the result of the breakdown of the Macedonian front and of the reduction of reserves it has led to on the Western front, as a result also of the impossibility in which we are to make good the very losses that have been inflicted on us in the fighting of the past ten days, there no longer remains any hope—as far as man can judge—of forcing the enemy to make peace.

The enemy on its side is daily throwing fresh reserves into the struggle. Nevertheless the German Army remains firm and victoriously repulses all attacks. But the situation becomes more critical every day and may force the High Command to take measures the consequence of which will be very serious.

Under the circumstances it is better to cease the struggle to save the German people and their Allies from useless losses.

Every day lost costs us thousands of brave soldiers.

The Chancellor yielded to this pressure, and on October 5 telegraphs through the Swiss Government to President Wilson to beg him to summon the belligerents to peace negotiations upon the basis of the Fourteen Points, and to put an end to bloodshed by the immediate conclusion of an Armistice. Everybody, except Prince Max von Baden, the Vice-Chancellor von Payer, and the Secretary of State Solf, seems to believe that by itself this cable will suffice to relieve the crisis. As a matter of fact, Germany by sending this despatch, delivers herself into the hands of the Allies. The situation from now on to the eleventh of November is to develop with the relentless logic of triumphant Fate.

Digitized by Google

III

On October 6 the Ministers hold a meeting. They would like to hear other generals besides General Ludendorff. Von Payer says:

"We must; Ludendorff's nerves are no longer equal to the strain."

It is decided to seek the intervention of the Kaiser—for the resignation of the First Quartermaster General is feared if an attempt is made to consult his subordinates. On October 8 President Wilson replies to the German Note of the fifth. It is a brief reply which throws the recipients into consternation they cannot conceal. No conversation is possible, declares the President, either on peace or on an armistice until preliminary guarantees shall have been furnished. These are the acceptation pure and simple of the bases of peace laid down on January 8, 1918, and in the President's subsequent addresses; the certainty that the Chancellor does not speak only in the name of the constituted authorities who so far have been responsible for the conduct of the war; the evacuation of all invaded territories. The President will transmit no communication to his associates before having received full satisfaction on these three points.

The German Ministers hold a council again. There are successive conferences on the ninth, the tenth, the eleventh and the twelfth. General Ludendorff is present at the first. The Ministers make him feel that the responsibility for the present situation is his and therefore his also the responsibility for the answer which must be prepared. He addresses them at length. He begins with a long historical disquisition; ends in a profuse and contradictory sea of words. At times he is reassuring:

"I see no immediate danger for the Lorraine frontier. The Rhenish provinces can be held for a long time yet. Once we are back on our own frontier the Army will be able to repulse any enemy attack."

At times he gives way to alarmist outbursts:

Digitized by Google

"The danger of a break through is always there. I do not fear it. But it is possible. Yesterday its success hung upon a thread. The Armies must have rest."

But of positive conclusions none. He maintains that the offer of peace and even more so the Armistice are indispensable, but as to the attitude to be taken in presence of the conditions which are attached to the one and to the other by the President of the United States, not a word that is clear or plain:

"We cannot give up German fortresses. The demand for the evacuation of Metz would be contrary to our honour. I do not fear a catastrophe. But I am anxious to save the Army so as to be able to have it still as a means of pressure during the peace negotiations."

Here perhaps we have the true inwardness of his thoughts. To negotiate and gain time to recuperate, so as if need be to break off afterwards. As a matter of fact the German General Staff, during this period, sought a suspension of arms rather than a definite peace. On the ninth, it still thought that it could obtain it. Hence its interventions in the preparation of the reply; hence its attempts at equivocation and ruse. The reply was sent on the twelfth in the name of Germany and of Austria-Hungary. Germany accepts the Fourteen Points and assumes that its Allies will do likewise; the Chancellor, in full accord with the Reichstag, speaks in the name of the Government and of the German people; Germany is disposed to "accede to the proposals of evacuation"—that is where the rub comes—but she thinks they ought to be the object of preliminary negotiations and suggests the appointment of a mixed commission to deal with this matter. If the Allies lend themselves to this, Germany is saved for the time being. She will be able to withdraw her material to the rear and regroup her forces. Pending the meeting of the mixed Commission and during the protracted discussion of evacuation,—"methodical evacuation" as Hindenburg said—she will have the time to rebuild an army. The Ministers agree to this draft. But they are careful to obtain from

Digitized by Google

Marshal Hindenburg and General Ludendorff their approval in writing. The manœuvre, unskilled though it be, inspires hope in all.

Then comes the thunderbolt. President Wilson refuses to fall into the trap and crossing swords in earnest presses his attack to the utmost in the Note of October 14. A mixed Commission for evacuation? No! These are matters which like the Armistice itself "must be left to the judgment and advice of the military advisers of the Allied and Associated Governments." Besides no Armistice is possible if it does not furnish "absolutely satisfactory safeguards and guarantees of the maintenance of the present military supremacy of the Armies of the United States and of its Allies." Besides, no Armistice "so long as the armed forces of Germany continue the illegal and inhuman practices which they still persist in." Finally no Armistice so long as the German nation shall be in the hands of the military power which has disturbed the peace of the world. As to Austria-Hungary, Germany has no interest therein and the President will reply directly. In a single page the whole poor scaffolding of the German Great General Staff is overthrown. The Armistice and peace are not to be means of delaying a disaster and of preparing revenge. On the main question itself the reply must be Yes or No! If it is no, war will continue, as it has gone on for the last three months, by Allied victories. If it is yes, the military capitulation must be immediate and complete by the acceptance pure and simple of terms which will be fixed by the military advisers of the Allies alone.

This time the Germans understand. As Colonel Heye of the German General Staff will say a few days later, on October 17, "One realizes that it is a question of 'to be or not to be,'" and the military shrink back fearful of the consequences of their pressing insistence on October 1. As soon as Mr. Wilson's answer is known, General Ludendorff has telegraphed to hasten the return of troops from the Near East—the usefulness of which had seemed to him questionable on the ninth—and has suggested that an ap-

Digitized by Google

peal should be made to the German people—the outcome of which he had declared, on the same day, would be ridiculous. On the seventeenth, he arrives in Berlin and appears before the Government. The Chancellor reminds Ludendorff rather sharply that fifteen days previously he had been obliged, much against his will, to do the General's bidding and demands an explanation. Ludendorff becomes overbearing:

"I have already said to you, Mr. Chancellor, that I consider a break through possible, but not probable. If you question me I can conscientiously only give you this reply. I do not fear a break through. If I am given reinforcements I look upon the future with confidence. If the Army holds for four weeks and winter arrives, we shall be out of difficulty. The offensive strength of our enemies has recently been very weak. If our battalions were at normal strength, the situation would be saved. Neither aviation nor tanks alarm me. If the Armistice negotiations were to begin, the undertaking to evacuate occupied territory would alone and in itself constitute a real aggravation of our military situation. Already the mere fact that it is spoken of has had untoward consequences. Yesterday and the day before the enemy has made little progress. We ought to say to our enemies before accepting conditions which are too hard, 'Come and take them by force.' "

Such glaring contradictions exasperated the Ministers, especially Secretary of State Solf who reminds General Ludendorff of his appeals of October 1. The reply is:

"Why didn't you send me long ago the reinforcements about which you are talking to-day?"

And Colonel Heye adds:

"When the Great General Headquarters decided to make an offer of peace, it believed that an honourable peace could be concluded. But we must accept the decisive battle if the conditions imposed upon us touch our honour."

Mr. Solf replies:

Digitized by Google

"If a refusal breaks off the negotiations with Wilson, will you take the responsibility?"

"Yes," answers the General.

They separate without coming to a decision and on the twentieth Ludendorff pushes forward Marshal Hindenburg who writes an embarrassed epistle of which this is the essential phrase:

> If we were beaten, our situation which is bad would not be appreciably worse than if we now accept the terms it is sought to impose upon us... We cannot, I insist, give up submarine warfare without compensation. It is better to fight to the last man to save our honour.

These are only words. They are without effect, for the High Command has lost its face. It talks, it writes: no one believes it. Baron von Lersner, liaison officer at German Headquarters, telephones a few days afterwards:

> The great General Staff is furious. But basing myself upon the long experience I have of it I can only place you on your guard in the most pressing manner against the possibility of having faith in its promises, and I recommend that you do not allow yourself to be turned away from the policy of peace which we have adopted. The military situation is to-day every bit as desperate as it was three weeks ago. No improvement is to be looked for and the invasion of our territory is only a question of weeks or at the very best of a few months.

The truth is that it is Ludendorff who is wrong and Lersner who is right. Since September 20, Marshal Foch, who had regained the initiative on July 18, has exploited his success. Three concentric and uninterrupted attacks on a wide front have deeply modified the strategic situation. In the north, from September 18 to October 18, the enemy has been driven from the Belgian coast, from the region of Lille, from the basin of Lens and has been forced to establish himself behind the Tervueren Canal, the Scheldt and the Northern Canal. In the center from September 27 to October 19, the Hindenburg line has

Digitized by Google

everywhere been broken through and the enemy is thrown back beyond the Sambre Canal, the Oise and the Serre. In Champagne and in Argonne a hard and arduous battle brings us, between September 16 and October 12, up to the Aisne and the Aire. On October 20 the German Armies from the Sea to the Meuse are everywhere in retreat. In four weeks, they have had to engage 139 divisions out of a total of 191. They have only seven fresh divisions in reserve and forty-four are utterly worn out. The average strength of the companies is only fifty men, although 40 per cent. of the battalions have been reduced from four companies to three. Two-thirds of their divisions have been almost constantly in line since September 1. They are short seventy thousand reinforcements every month, although the class of 1920 is already called to the colours.

War material cannot be renewed. Compared to June there are 25 per cent. less machine guns, 17 per cent. less field pieces, and 26 per cent. less heavy artillery. The lateral railways which from one end of the front to the other permit transports of men and material, the *voies de rocade,* of which the German staff made so fruitful a use during the war, are no longer at their disposal—four of the secondary lines and one principal line are wholly or in part in the hands of the Allies. Those which remain are almost blocked with supplies and evacuations, so much so that in the three first weeks of October it has only been possible to displace three divisions laterally, instead of nineteen so moved in May. Remember also that an enormous amount of war material is scattered all along the front and behind it. To save this, Germany has abandoned the opportunity that a rapid retreat might have afforded. Besides, this retreat is difficult for the forces which are at a distance from the German frontier, that is to say for the group of Armies of the German Crown Prince and of the Crown Prince of Bavaria, 130 divisions in all that have only a zone of 75 kilometers in width through which to withdraw. Finally the morale is low, very low, Hopes had run so high in July! The Great General Staff says it is

Digitized by Google

the fault of the Government which has not the interior well in hand. The Government is right in replying that it is rather the fault of events.

The Generals have demanded the Armistice, the Ministers take them at their word because they believe with von Lersner that "the invasion of German territory is only a matter of weeks or at most of a few months." Invasion: A word that for a hundred years Germany has been wont to apply only to its adversaries. It becomes the obsession of the Government. Capitulation on terms to be fixed by the victors alone in accordance with President Wilson's decision. Or invasion with the sole resources of a *levée en masse* peculiarly problematical in a country that has already called 14,000,000 men to the colours. But there is no other alternative. The Ministers make their choice. They will capitulate.

After a week of consideration, of hesitation, of exchanges with the Great General Staff on which they are determined to pin the initial responsibility, the Ministers are to reply on October 21 to the American Note of the fourteenth. This time there can be no playing on words, no talk of negotiation, for it is only a question of submission. Evacuation of occupied territory? The demand is accepted. Armistice? Germany recognizes that its terms must be left to the appreciation of the competent military authorities. Illegal acts committed by the German forces? These are destructions necessary in a retreat and permitted by international law; strict instructions will nevertheless be given that private property shall be respected. Torpedoings? Not deliberate; orders however have been sent to the commanders to spare passenger ships. Suppression of the arbitrary power? It is already accomplished; the Cabinet is responsible to Parliament; the Constitution will be revised; the Government is free from any military or irresponsible influence. This time Germany bound hand and foot is rivetted to Wilsonian dialectics. Since she does not break, she gives herself up. The President takes good note thereof on October 23, in

Digitized by Google

announcing that having received all the undertakings demanded in his preceding Messages, he has informed his Associates. And once again so that there can be no doubt, he repeats the fundamental conditions from which Germany cannot escape.

1. The Armistice will be concluded only if the military advisers of the Allied and Associated Governments deem it possible from the military point of view.

2. The only Armistice which can be suggested to the Associated Governments will be an Armistice that will render impossible (where are the German hopes of the beginning of October?) any resumption of hostilities by Germany and leave the Associated Powers in a position to enforce any arrangements that may be entered into.

3. The peoples of the world have and can have no confidence in the word of those who have hitherto been the masters of Germany. Nothing could be gained by not stating these essential conditions.

On October 21, Germany had admitted her defeat. It remained for the Allied Governments to fix the conditions of their victory and the bases of their security.

IV

On October 23 President Wilson who, since the fifth, has remained in daily contact with the European Governments and has given out his correspondence with Germany, day by day, communicates this correspondence officially to his associates and asks them two questions:

1. Regarding the peace, and in view of the assurances given by the Chancellor, are the Associated Governments ready to conclude peace on the terms and according to the principles already made public?

2. Regarding the Armistice and if the reply to the previous question is in the affirmative, are the Associated Governments ready to ask their military advisers and the military advisers of the United States to submit to them the necessary conditions which must be fulfilled by an

Digitized by Google

Armistice such as will protect absolutely the interests of the peoples concerned and to assure to the Associated Governments unlimited power to safeguard and impose the details of the peace to which the German Government has consented, provided always that the military advisers consider such an armistice possible from a military point of view?

I do not believe that ever problem was more clearly defined.

First, the question of principle;—do the commanding generals believe that from a military point of view hostilities can be suspended, or do they believe on the contrary that they should be continued?

Second, the question of execution. If the Armistice is possible and desirable, what are the conditions necessary to prevent Germany from beginning the war again and to permit the Allies to impose their terms of peace?

It is to the military authorities that Mr. Wilson asks that these two questions shall be submitted. It is to them that he entrusts in this matter the sovereign rights of the Governments. M. Clemenceau is, on this point, in complete agreement with the President of the United States. To stop the hostilities otherwise than on the express advice and in the manner fixed by the chiefs who have had the responsibility of the military operations would be contrary to all the principles which have inspired his war policy. In the name of the Supreme Council of the Allies, over which he presides, he therefore transmits the correspondence to Marshal Foch, the Commander-in-Chief, who by virtue of his position and his responsibility is to answer the two questions asked.

On October 25, Marshal Foch summons to Senlis, General Pétain, Marshal Haig, General Pershing and General Gillain, Chief of Staff of the Belgian Army. The latter however is delayed and does not attend the meeting. The Commander-in-Chief reads the correspondence to them and asks their advice. None of them proposes to refuse the Armistice. On the terms of the Armistice their opinions are

Digitized by Google

divided. Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig speaks first. In his view the Armistice should be concluded and concluded on very moderate terms. The victorious Allied Armies are extenuated. The units need to be reorganized. Germany is not broken in the military sense. During the last weeks her Armies have withdrawn fighting very bravely and in excellent order. Therefore, if it is really desired to conclude an armistice—and this in his view is very desirable—it is necessary to grant Germany conditions which she can accept. That is to say the evacuation of the invaded territory in France and Belgium as well as Alsace-Lorraine, and the restitution of the rolling stock taken at the beginning of the war from the French and Belgians. If more is demanded, there is a risk of prolonging the war, which has already cost so much, and of exasperating German national feeling, with very doubtful results. For the evacuation of all invaded territories and of Alsace-Lorraine is sufficient to seal the victory.

General Pershing says that, as Chief of the American Army in France, he desires first to hear what General Pétain has to say and to give his opinion afterwards. General Pétain is of opinion, that if an armistice is concluded, it must be a real armistice complying fully and completely with the definition laid down by President Wilson in his Note of October 23; an armistice making it impossible for the enemy to resume hostilities and permitting the Allies to impose their own terms of peace. For that, two things are essential: the first is that the German Army should return to Germany without a cannon or a tank, and with only its carrying arms. To attain this, he makes practical suggestions. The specification of a time for withdrawal so short that it will be materially impossible for the enemy to carry away his war material. In addition to the evacuation by the Germans of all invaded territory and of Alsace-Lorraine, the occupation by the Allied Armies not only of the left bank of the Rhine but of a zone fifty kilometers wide on the right bank; at the same time the delivery of 5,000 locomotives and 100,000 cars

Digitized by Google

should be demanded. General Pétain adds however that, although these conditions are indispensable in his opinion, it is hardly expected that the Germans will accept them.

General Pershing in a few words, says that he agrees with General Pétain. Marshal Foch thanks his guests for their suggestions which he will consider. The conference ends. The next day, October 26, Marshal Foch communicates his final conclusions to M. Clemenceau by letter. Extracts of this letter have been published. It is well to quote it here in its entirety as far as the Western front is concerned.

After having consulted the Commanders-in-Chief of the American, British and French Armies,* I have the honour to make known to you the military conditions under which can be granted an armistice "capable" of protecting absolutely the interests of the nations concerned and assuring to the Associated Governments unlimited power to safeguard and impose the conditions of Peace to which the German Government has consented.

I. Immediate evacuation of all territory invaded contrary to law: Belgium, France, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg.

Immediate repatriation of their inhabitants.

Surrender of part of the enemy war material in the evacuated regions.

This evacuation to be effected with a degree of speed that will make it impossible for the enemy to remove a large part of the war material and supplies of all kinds now there; that is to say in the following delays:

At the end of four days the German troops must have withdrawn beyond the first line on the accompanying map;

At the end of four more days they must be beyond the second line;

At the end of a further period of six days they must be beyond the third line;

Belgium, Luxemburg and Alsace-Lorraine will thus be liberated within a total time of fourteen days;

The time limits will run from the day of the signature of the Armistice.

*The Chief of Staff of the Belgian Army summoned at the same time as the Commanders-in-Chief could not on account of the distance reach my H. Q. in time.

Digitized by Google

In any case the total material left behind by the enemy must amount to:

5,000 cannon (half heavy, half field pieces)*.

30,000 machine guns†.

3,000 minnenwerfer.

To be delivered where they now are in a manner to be later determined.

The Allied troops will follow up in these regions the progress of the evacuation which will be carried out in accordance with regulations to be later determined.

II. Evacuation of the territory on the left bank of the Rhine by the enemy Armies.

The territory on the left bank of the Rhine will continue to be administered by the local authorities under the supervision of the Allied Armies of occupation.

The Allied forces will assure the occupation of this territory by garrisons holding the principal Rhine crossings (Mayence, Coblenz, Strassburg), with at these points bridgeheads of thirty kilometers radius on the right bank.

Holding also the strategic points of the region. A neutral zone will be established on the right bank on the river running parallel to the river and forty kilometers to the east of it from the Swiss to the Dutch frontiers.

The evacuation by the enemy of the Rhine territories must be completed within the following time limits:

Up to the Rhine, eight days over and above the time limits set above (that is to say twenty-two days in all from the signature of the Armistice).

Beyond the neutral zone; three additional days (twenty-five days in all from the signature of the Armistice).

III. In all the territories evacuated by the enemy there must be no destruction of any kind and no harm must be done to the persons or property of the inhabitants.

IV. The enemy must deliver under conditions to be determined 5,000 locomotives and 150,000 cars in good running order.‡

---

*Or about one-third of the artillery of the German Army.

†Or about half the machine guns of the German Army.

‡Of these amounts 2,500 locomotives and 135,000 cars represent the rolling stock carried off from France and Belgium, the surplus is needed for the service of the railroads on the left bank of the Rhine.

Digitized by Google

V. The German High Command must be bound to reveal the position of all mines or retarded mines laid in the evacuated territories and to assist in their location and destruction under penalty of reprisals.

VI. The compliance by the enemy with these conditions will occupy a total of twenty-five days. In order to guarantee its execution, the blockade will be maintained during this period. It is only at the expiration of this delay and after these conditions have been fulfilled that the sending of food supplies to the enemy can be authorized on conditions to be determined by separate agreement.

VII. Allied prisoners to be returned in the shortest possible time in a manner to be determined later.

This letter calls for no comment. Marshal Foch has taken counsel and considered. He has put to himself the question he urged upon his pupils at the Ecole de Guerre. "What is the object?" To break the fighting strength of Germany; to oblige Germany to submit to conditions of peace whatever they may be. In order to make sure of this, can we confine ourselves to Marshal Haig's suggestions? No; for the German Army after evacuating the invaded territories, which it would leave with the honours of war, would find itself entire and whole inside its own frontiers and remain a danger to the Allies. Is it necessary to avert this danger to deprive the enemy of all his war material? No; it will be sufficient to take that without which he cannot resume hostilities, and in addition to hold the Rhine with bridgeheads at its principal crossings. In the absolute freedom of judgment which the Allied Governments solemnly conferred upon him, the Commander-in-Chief decides that this is what is necessary and sufficient. The opportunity is also to be afforded him within the next few days of developing his views and explaining on what his decision is based.

Between October 23 and 26, the heads of the European Governments and their Ministers of Foreign Affairs have all gathered in Paris. On the twenty-fourth Mr. House joins them six weeks ahead of President Wilson. The

Digitized by Google

meetings begin at once. They have not yet the official character they will assume on the thirty-first when the Supreme Council meets at Versailles. Generally the meetings are held in the mornings at Mr. House's place in the rue de l'Université; in the afternoons at M. Clemenceau's office in the Ministry of War or at Mr. Pichon's at the Quay d' Orsay. The position on the various fronts (the Armistice with Austria-Hungary is momentarily expected) and the terms of the German Armistice are the subject of the discussions in which Marshal Foch on several occasions takes part. Some do not find these terms severe enough. Thus General Tasker H. Bliss, representing the United States on the Inter-allied Military Council, would prefer a shorter and in some respects a more rigorous text. In his opinion two clauses would be sufficient: total disarmament and complete demobilization. This would make it quite certain that Germany could not resume hostilities. This would force her in advance to submit to all peace conditions. General Bliss, after a remarkable exposition of his views, summarizes them as follows in a Note which he hands to one of the members of the Supreme Council.*

For the reasons stated above I suggest:

I. That the Associated Powers demand the complete disarmament and demobilization of the military and naval forces of the enemy, leaving only to him such internal force as may be considered necessary to the maintenance of order in enemy territory. This implies the evacuation of all invaded territories and their evacuation not by armed or partially armed men but by disarmed men.

The German Army thus deprived of its arms cannot fight, and being demobilized cannot again be called together for the objects of this war.

II. That the Associated Powers inform the enemy that there will be no diminution of their war aims which will be submitted to a full and reasonable discussion between the nations associated in the war and that, even if the enemy himself is given a hearing, he

*Outside of the exchange of views between the military advisers, this proposal was not officially submitted by the American delegates to the heads of the Governments.

Digitized by Google

will have to submit to everything that the Associated Powers shall finally decide to be necessary to assure now and in the future the Peace of the World.

On the other hand, in naval matters the representatives of Great Britain do not consider sufficient the delivery of 150 submarines demanded by Marshal Foch and think that nearly all the battle-ships and cruisers ought to be surrendered also. It is in these circumstances that the final discussion from October 27 to 31, begins. I reproduce its salient passages.

True to the mission entrusted to him by President Wilson, Mr. House first of all asks Marshal Foch the following questions:

"Tell us, M. le Maréchal, purely from the military point of view and without regard to any other consideration, whether you would rather that the Germans should reject or accept the Armistice on the lines we have just agreed upon."

Marshal Foch answers:

"The only aim of war is to obtain results. If the Germans sign an armistice on the general lines we have just determined we shall have obtained the result we seek. *Our aims being accomplished, no one has the right to shed another drop of blood.*"

In other words, the Commander-in-Chief is of opinion that if the Germans accept the conditions laid down in his letter of October 23—and he still has his doubts upon this point—it is necessary to conclude the Armistice and cease the war without hesitation. The Commander-in-Chief goes even further and, replying to the suggestions of General Bliss and of Mr. Lloyd George, and to others of the same nature, firmly insists on the danger of additional demands. He says:

"Nothing is easier than to propose and even to impose conditions on paper. It is simple and logical to demand the disarmament of the German Armies in the field. But how will you make sure of it? Will you pass through the

Digitized by Google

German Armies and occupy before them the Rhine crossings? Demobilization? I am willing. But do you intend to occupy the whole of Germany? For if we do not occupy the whole of Germany, we shall never be certain that demobilization has been carried out. As for the German surface fleet, what do you fear from it? During the whole war only a few of its units have ventured from their ports. The surrender of these units will be merely a manifestation, which will please the public but nothing more. Why make the Armistice harder, for I repeat its sole object is to place Germany *hors de combat*."

And Marshal Foch adds:

"What will you do if the Germans after having accepted the severe and ample conditions that I propose, refuse to subscribe to the additional humiliations you suggest? Will you on that account run the risk of a renewal of hostilities with the useless sacrifice of thousands of lives?"

That was the whole question. Would harsher terms prolong the war? For how many months? What would be the risks? Colonel House and Lloyd George were anxious —as was also M. Clemenceau—to obtain the maximum, so long as the military authorities considered the maximum necessary. On October 29 they ask the Commander-in-Chief to reply to these points. And Marshal Foch answers:

"I am not in a position and no one is in a position to give you an accurate forecast. It may last three months, perhaps four or five. Who knows? However if I cannot fix a date, I can reply to the main question. On the main question I say this: *the conditions laid down by your military advisers are the very conditions which we ought to and could impose after the success of our further operations. So if the Germans accept them now, it is useless to go on fighting.*"

On October 31, the heads of Governments, assisted by Marshal Foch, decide upon the final text to be submitted to the Supreme Council of the Allies which is to meet on the afternoon of the same day. This text adopts all the

Digitized by Google

proposals of the Commander-in-Chief with a few additions and specifications of details, the foremost of which are:

The surrender of 2,000 fighting and bombing planes, and firstly all the D 7's and all the night bombing machines.

In all German territory evacuated by the enemy all military installations of whatever nature to be delivered intact.

Ways and means of communication of all kinds, railways, waterways, roads, bridges, telegraphs, telephones, to be left undamaged. All the civilian and military employees actually working them to remain.

The right of requisition shall be exercised by the Allied Armies and the United States Armies in all occupied territory. The upkeep of all the troops of occupation in the Rhine districts (excluding Alsace-Lorraine) shall be charged to the German Government.

German prisoners of war to be returned only after the signature of Peace preliminaries.

Delivery to the Allies of 10,000 motor trucks.

The railways of Alsace-Lorraine shall be handed over together with all personnel and material.

On October 31 at three o'clock the Supreme Council meets at Versailles. There are present Clemenceau, Pichon, Lloyd George, Balfour, Orlando, Sonnino, House, Venizelos, Vesnitch, Marshal Foch, Admiral Wemyss, Generals Sir Henry Wilson, Bliss and De Robilant. M. Clemenceau calls on Marshal Foch who explains the military position created by the victories of the last months. He describes the position of the German Army, after having stated its losses. He says:

"An Army which for three months has been forced to retreat, and which can no longer react is a beaten Army. But all the same it persists in methodical destruction, accepting battle everywhere.

"The military disorganization of the enemy is an undoubted fact. But the struggle goes on and continues."

After the Germans, the Allies. Marshal Foch expresses himself thus:

"On our side despite the approach of winter we can

Digitized by Google

continue this battle on its 400 kilometers front. The effectives of our Army permit this. The British and French Armies have certainly suffered but they can go on. The American Army is still fresh and its reserves are arriving every day. The morale of the troops is excellent. This enables us to go on, if the enemy so desires, till complete victory is won."

No one asking to be heard in discussion of Marshal Foch's point of view which is already well known from the preceding meetings, the Austrian Armistice is next taken up and occupies the remainder of the meeting of October 31. On November 1 another meeting is held, followed by two others on the second and fourth, the greater part of which is devoted to the German Armistice. As a whole, except for few aggravations, the plan of the Commander-in-Chief is adopted purely and simply, for the Western as for the Eastern front.

On the naval clauses the discussion is more prolonged. Despite the objections put forward by Marshal Foch at previous meetings the Council of Admirals insists that the greater part of the German surface fleet must be surrendered and interned. It is curious to note that Mr. Lloyd George, who had opposed none of the land clauses, expresses fear that the demands of the naval experts may prolong the war to no purpose. He asks that the decision be put off at least till Austria has capitulated.

"We must ask ourselves," he says, "whether we want to make peace at once or to continue the war for a year. It may be very tempting to take a certain number of ships. But that is not the main issue. At present each of our Armies is losing more men in a week than at any time during the first four years of war. We must not lose sight of that. If Austria gives in, we shall know where we are. By Monday we shall be better able to say."

And so the discussion is resumed on November 4 when the following text is adopted:

The German surface war-ships which shall be designated by the

Digitized by Google

Allies and the United States shall forthwith be disarmed and thereafter interned in neutral ports or failing them, Allied ports.

There remains a grave question put forward by the French delegation. The Question of Reparations. At the meeting of November 2, M. Clemenceau starts the discussion:

"I would like to return now to the question of Reparations and of damages. It would not be understood with us in France if we did not insert a clause in the Armistice to this effect. All I am asking for is the addition of three words, 'Reparations for damages' without further comment."

The following discussion ensues:

M. Hymans: "Would that be a condition of armistice?"

M. Sonnino: "It is rather a condition of peace."

M. Bonar Law: "It is useless to insert in the conditions of armistice a clause that cannot be rapidly fulfilled."

M. Clemenceau: "I only want to lay down the principle. You must not forget that the French people is one of those which have suffered most. They would not understand if we did not make some allusion to this matter."

Mr. Lloyd George: "If you are going to deal with the reparation of damages on land, you must also mention the question of reparations for the ships sunk."

M. Clemenceau: "That is all covered by my three words: 'Reparations for damages.' I beg the Council to understand the feeling of the French people."

M. Vesnitch: "And of the Serbian...."

M. Hymans: "And of the Belgian...."

M. Sonnino: "And of the Italian people also...."

Mr. House: "As this is a matter of importance to all, I propose the adoption of M. Clemenceau's addition."

Mr. Bonar Law: "It is already mentioned in our letter to President Wilson. It is useless to repeat it."

Mr. Orlando: "I accept it in principle although no mention has been made of it in the conditions of the Austrian Armistice."

Digitized by Google

The addition of "Reparations for damages" is then adopted. M. Klotz suggests that the addition be preceded by the words "with the reservation that any future claims by the Allies and the United States remain unaffected." This is decided. The Allied Governments, now agreed on everything the Armistice is to contain, are in a position to reply to President Wilson's telegram of October 23. They therefore request Mr. House to communicate to the President the conditions which have been agreed upon with two reservations. This communication is made in the following terms:

The Allied Governments have given careful consideration to the correspondence which has passed between the President of the United States and the German Government.

Subject to the qualifications which follow they declare their willingness to make peace with the Government of Germany on the terms of peace laid down in the Address of the President to Congress on January 8, 1918, and the principles of settlement enunciated in his subsequent address.

They must point out, however, that clause 2, relating to what is usually described as the "Freedom of the Seas" is open to various interpretations some of which they could not accept. They must therefore reserve to themselves complete freedom on this subject when they enter the Peace Conference.

Furthermore in the conditions of peace laid down in his address to Congress on January 8, 1918, the President declared that the invaded territories must be restored as well as evacuated and freed and the Allied Governments feel that no doubt ought to be allowed to exist as to what this provision implies. By it they understand that compensations will be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea and from the air.

Mr. Wilson is at the same time asked to notify the German Government that it can send a duly accredited plenipotentiary to Marshal Foch who, assisted by a British Admiral, would be authorized to act in the name of the Allied and Associated Governments.

Digitized by Google

V

In what state of mind is this decision to find Germany? I have already shown that after her Note of October 21 and the American reply of October 23 she was bound without escape to submit to the conditions of the Allies. The days which follow make this abundantly clear. The German Great General Staff continues to be exasperated. Herr von Payer, who had been there on the twenty-sixth, asserts that he was repeatedly told, "We are not beaten. We must not capitulate." It is true that to his question, "What chances shall we have of making a better peace if we go on?" he gets no definite answer, unless it is that "Clemenceau is in disagreement with Foch about the conditions" and that "Foch by urging moderate conditions shows the high opinion he still has of German power of resistance." The Ministers question other Generals, Gallwitz, Mudra, who declare themselves confident, but furnish no grounds for their hopes. Everything goes to smash. On the twenty-sixth, Ludendorff resigns and his resignation is accepted. On the twenty-seventh, the Emperor of Austria announces that he is going to make a separate peace. On the thirtieth he asks for an armistice, announcing it is true that if the conditions are too severe "he will put himself at the head of his Austrian Germans." On the twenty-seventh, the German Government had already telegraphed to President Wilson that it was awaiting his proposals.

On November 5, General Groner, Ludendorff's successor, acknowledges that the military situation has grown worse. For Marshal Foch is continuing his concentric advance; the Armies of the North moving towards Brussels, the British Armies towards the Ardennes, the French Armies towards Givet, the Americans towards Mézières and Sedan. The Germans from November 4 to 9 lose the banks of the Scheldt on a wide front and are overwhelmed on the right bank of the Meuse. To finish them the Allied High Command prepares an offensive in Lorraine which

Digitized by Google

with Sarrebourg for its objective will hurl twenty-eight divisions of infantry, three divisions of cavalry, six hundred tanks and an enormous force of artillery against five or seven mediocre German divisions. When on November 6 the American Note of the fifth arrives announcing that in accordance with the conditions stipulated, Marshal Foch is ready to receive the German plenipotentiaries, they are appointed the same day and set out the next. The Emperor abdicates.

The rest is known. The meeting of the two Armistice Commissions at Rethondes on the morning of the eighth in the train of the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies; the attempt by Erzberger to transform the capitulation into a negotiation:

"We have come to receive your proposals with a view to arriving at the conclusion of an Armistice."

Marshal Foch cuts him short with:

"I have no proposals to make. Do you ask for an Armistice?"

"We ask for an Armistice."

"Very well. The conditions decided upon by the Allied Governments will be read to you."

These seventy-two hours of delay passed quickly. On November 10, Secretary of State Solf makes known by wireless that "the German Government accepts the conditions imposed." The eleventh at five o'clock in the morning, the protocol is signed. It is the same as the text adopted on November 4 by the Supreme Council at Versailles. For technical reasons, Marshal Foch has granted to Erzberger three slight modifications: 25,000 machine guns instead of 30,000; 1,700 aeroplanes instead of 2,000; 5,000 motor trucks instead of 10,000; in addition to a promise of prompt measures to insure food supply. On November 11, at eleven o'clock in the morning the Armistice takes effect on the whole front. The same day all the nations which had fought for Liberty and Justice celebrated the signature.

Such in its logical evolution was the origin of the Armis-

Digitized by Google

tice of November 11. Misconception born of ignorance cannot withstand the light of facts. Linked together in cause and effect the facts throw their critical light upon the accumulation of legends and make the truth stand out. Absent from France in America from October 17 to November 20, in place of personal reminiscences I have consulted all the written and oral testimony. The German documents are taken from the official account published by the Government of the Reich, the authenticity of which has been challenged by none of those concerned. None of the texts reproduced here can be disputed. My account is true and I believe it to be complete.

What remains of the fiction believed by so many of an Armistice secretly determined upon by an American dictator; submitted to by the European Governments; imposed by their weakness upon the victorious Armies despite the opposition of the Generals? The Armistice was discussed in the open light of day. President Wilson only consented to communicate it to his associates on the triple condition that its principle be approved by the military authorities and its clauses would be drawn up by them; that it be imposed upon the enemy and not discussed with him; that it be such as to prevent all resumption of hostilities and assure the submission of the vanquished to the terms of peace. So it was that the discussion went on with Berlin till October 23, and in Paris from that date till November 5. It was to the Commander-in-Chief that final decision was left not only on the principle of the Armistice but upon its application. He it was who drew up the text. And it was his draft that was adopted. The action of the Governments was limited to endorsing it and making it more severe. That is the truth:—it is perhaps less picturesque but certainly more in accord with common sense.

May it in truth be said, after what I have just written of the German crises in October, that Marshal Foch made a mistake in not exacting more than he did—and that no matter what we had asked the people in Berlin would have accepted everything just as they accepted the surrender of

Digitized by Google

their Navy? Of course this can always be asserted. I would point out, however, that criticism foretelling the past is not hard to level against action which had to take the future into account. To pass judgment on the decisions taken in October, 1918, by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armies of the Entente, and approved afterwards by the Governments, it is necessary to place one's self in his position of knowledge. The official German documents which I am able to insert in this work had not then been published. The facts they relate were not then known. Nothing was known of the extraordinary panic which on October 1 had seized the Great General Staff; nothing was known either of its unavoidable consequences. Marshal Foch was sure of victory and he said so. He added that the conditions fixed by him on October 26 were the very conditions which we should have been able to dictate after the success of further operations. But having done that, he fulfilled his duty in refusing to fix an exact date as to the duration of German resistance, the strength of which in critical junctures continued to be shown—contrary to the provisions of Ludendorff—up to the very day of the Armistice. He also fulfilled his duty in refusing to take chances with the morale of the troops and of the peoples, by confining himself to what he considered to be necessary and sufficient. It is easy two years afterwards to decide that the war would only have lasted a week longer. Marshal Foch could not guarantee that. Nobody even to-day could guarantee it absolutely. A few days before the Armistice one of our Army Commanders said to a public man:

"We are going to take up our positions for another winter."

The responsible Chief would have none of "another winter" which he did not consider essential to the achievement of victory. The Governments determined to impose everything that the Commander-in-Chief exacted but did not feel justified in demanding more. Moreover, the problem was to place Germany in a position in which she could not begin the war again—she was not able to

Digitized by Google

begin it again; the problem was to force Germany to sign the Peace,—she signed it. Events have thus shown that Marshal Foch was right. The Armistice marked the capitulation of the enemy, a capitulation which was an unconditional surrender.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

THE PEACE CONFERENCE

THE work which awaited the framers of the Peace was as great and as unprecedented as the war which was to be brought to a close.

Great and unprecedented in its scope: for the first time in history entire nations had fought. Seventy million men had been mobilized, thirty million had been wounded and nearly ten million had died. Nothing in the past could compare with it. The dead alone outnumbered all the Armies of Napoleon. Great and unprecedented in its complexity: nation having fought nation, there had been brought into play the sum total of all national forces: agricultural, industrial, commercial and financial. All these potent factors of international life had to be taken into account in making the Treaty. Read over the great peace treaties of the past,—for the most part child's play compared to this! Frontier changes limited to a few fragments of the map of Europe; indemnities of a few millions —the five thousand millions exacted in 1871 from France were looked upon at the time as a financial monstrosity and a gross abuse of power; economic clauses in which the victor imposed upon the vanquished the most favoured nation clause! A peace treaty had certain classic outlines which were filled in according to more or less settled traditions.

The map of the world had to be remade, and under what conditions! Germany's persistent savagery had left more ruins in the victorious countries than the invasions of the barbarians had ever made in the lands they overran and conquered. The resources of all the belligerents had been

Digitized by Google

equally exhausted by the duration of the struggle, and as the damages rightly demanded by the creditors rose, the capacity for payment of the debtors fell. Mr. Lloyd George had said in 1918, "Germany shall pay for everything." When the Conference met, it was of necessity obliged to ascertain how much and in what manner Germany could pay. And ways had to be devised to extend the time of payment; for it was quite evident a country no matter how rich could not pay hundreds of millions in a few months and no matter how criminal could not have undergone so prolonged a strain without diminishing its resources. The execution of the peace terms thus became not a matter of months but of years. It implied a lasting union of the forces which had won the war. Not the victors alone but the whole world had to be given the certainty that Germany would not repeat her offense. The fundamental aims of Liberty and Justice which for fifty-two months had furnished the moral strength and stimulus of the nations in arms had to be realized. Finally the unity of the Allies which had led to their victory had to be maintained and made closer so that they might be as well prepared for common action in the future as they had been in the past. Failing this, the Peace would be lacking in the essential factor that had won the Victory.

The history of the war foreshadowed the nature of the peace as much by the official acts of Governments as by the spontaneous expression of public opinion. When France knew that she was being attacked by Germany, she proclaimed her war aims with a single voice. They were the defense of her frontiers, the redemption of Alsace-Lorraine and the maintenance of national liberty as opposed to a policy of aggression and domination. In the Parliament and in the Press there was not a discordant note. France had bought this unanimity, the essential condition of success, with forty-three years of anguish. It was the memory of those dark days which gave substance to France's conception of Peace and War. Attacked once more France was once more going to fight for Right. Such

Digitized by Google

is our entry into the war,—now for the other nations. Serbia, having made every possible concession, cannot tolerate the substitution of another Power for her own on her own soil. Russia refusing to renounce the Slav gospel by abandoning Serbia to Austria's extortion. Belgium spurning the cynical offer to betray her word and her friends. Great Britain too, accepting the challenge to keep faith with a "scrap of paper." Group these facts, link them to the past, compare them with Germany's aggression and her methods, "Necessity knows no law." It is a conflict between two opposing principles. On one side the nations who put their faith in Might, on the other those who believe in Right. On one side the peoples who seek to enslave, on the other the free peoples who, whether they defend themselves against aggression or whether they come to the assistance of those attacked, are ready to sacrifice their lives to remain independent, masters of their own affairs at home and of their destinies abroad.

The war lasted and grew greater. Each passing hour emphasized and confirmed its original character. In 1915 Italy joins the Allies after laying down the conditions on which she leaves the Triple Alliance. Why? Because from Trentino to Trieste she has heard the voices of the *irredenti* calling. In 1916 Roumania comes in. Why? Because from beyond the plains of Transylvania the lament of Magyarized Roumanians had crossed the Carpathian Mountains. In 1917, Greece comes in. Why? Because on the borders of Macedonia, of Thrace and of Asia Minor she had felt—despite the German leanings of her King—the soul of ancient Hellas stirring. The breath of liberty passes everywhere. For half a century Alsace-Lorraine had been the symbol and the flaming torch of the oppressed. From East to West all who believed in the liberation of the oppressed and in the right of peoples to self-determination rallied to the echoes of the Marne and of Verdun. As time passed the circle of our supporters widened. And then came the democracy of the United States. When she entered the struggle, her war aims were indefinite but in

Digitized by Google

a few weeks she too understood and had a clear conception of what she was fighting for. From the Atlantic to the Pacific the word went forth. We are going to fight in Europe. Against what? Against Autocracy and Militarism. For what? For Justice and the Liberty of Nations. Words, mere words, answer the "realists." Yes, mere words, but words for which millions of soldiers stand ready to die. Words which are a living force. Words which from France have spread to the new world and have mobilized the hearts of the people without which there can be no military mobilization in a democracy. We were fighting for our ideal and for our frontier. America had no frontier to defend but she adopted our ideal and made it hers.

That is why—be it pleasing or not, a cause for congratulation or regret—the war of 1914 had a meaning and an aim of its own before any Government had made a declaration. From the first day of the German aggression, it was a war of peoples and of nationalities. A war for popular and national rights. Such it remained to the very end. That was why, in the closing months, Polish Czecho-Slovakian and Croatian regiments sprang from the soil. That is why millions of men made the last great sacrifice. That is why the Peace was to be the peace of free nations, of nations liberated from the forces of oppression. The peoples had spoken. The Governments in Europe and in America did but register their will. All declarations of "war aims"—invariably and identically—reflected the clear convictions and simple principles which led the Armies into battle.

The first of these declarations dates from the thirtieth of December, 1916. It is handed in the name of all the Allies to the American Ambassador by M. Aristide Briand in reply to a German Note transmitted by the neutrals. What does it contain? First of all the principle that "the Allied Governments are united for the defense of the liberties of peoples." Then the assertion "No peace is possible until assurances are given that reparations will be made for the

Digitized by Google

rights and liberties that have been violated: that the principles of nationality and of freedom of small states will be recognized and that some settlement definitely eliminating the causes that have so long menaced the nations, establishes the only effective guarantee for the world's safety." The rights of peoples, reparations, League of Nations,—such is the Allies' reply in three lines.

The second declaration was on the tenth of January, 1917. Again it is a Note, handed in the name of all the Allies to the American Ambassador by M. Aristide Briand in reply to a question of President Wilson. The principle is the same, but it is defined in greater detail.

1. Restoration of Belgium, Serbia and Montenegro and of the damages they have sustained.

2. Evacuation of the invaded territory of France, Russia and Roumania with full reparations.

3. Reorganization of Europe, guaranteed by a stable régime, based upon the respect of nationality and the right of all peoples, great and small, to pursue their economic development in full security and upon territorial and international conventions guaranteering land and sea frontiers against unwarranted aggression.

4. Restitution of provinces or territories previously taken from the Allies by force or against the will of the inhabitants.

5. Liberation of Italians, Slavs, Roumanians and Czecho-Slovaks from foreign domination.

6. Liberation of the population subjected to the bloody tyranny of the Turks; rejection out of Europe of the Ottoman Empire as foreign to western civilization.

7. The intentions of his Majesty the Emperor of Russia towards Poland are clearly indicated in the proclamation which he has just addressed to his Armies.

8. The Allies have never aimed at the extermination of the German peoples or at their disappearance as a political entity.

Bear these eight points in mind. We shall meet them again. Six months later, after a long debate, the French Parliament in turn deems it necessary to declare its war aims in two formal resolutions. On June 5, 1917, the Chamber adopts, by 467 votes to 52, the following:

Digitized by Google

The Chamber endorsing the unanimous protest made in 1871 to the National Assembly by the representatives of Alsace-Lorraine, torn against her will from France, declares that the war, imposed on Europe by the aggression of German Imperialism, must lead to the liberation of invaded territory, the return of Alsace-Lorraine to the mother country and to just reparation of damages.

Foreign to all thought of conquest or enslavement of foreign people, the Chamber trusts that the efforts of the Army of the Republic and her Allies will permit, after Prussian militarism is overthrown, the securing of lasting guarantees of peace and independence from great and small nations alike by association in a League of Nations, already in preparation.

The following day, June 6, 1917, the Senate unanimously votes a similar resolution:

The Senate convinced that lasting peace can be secured only by the victory of the Allied Armies;

Asserts the will of France, true to her alliances, faithful to her ideal of independence and liberty for all peoples, to pursue the war until Alsace-Lorraine are restored, crimes are punished, damages are repaired and guarantees against further aggression by German militarism are secured.

In England, in Italy, in Belgium, the Parliaments in like terms confirmed the declarations of their Governments and the instinctive desires of their peoples. All the European Allies are thus after three years of war absolutely agreed on two things: the first that no peace is possible until victory has been won; the second, that, victory won, the Allies will demand for themselves and for all nations the right of self-determination for all peoples, reparations, guarantees and a League of Nations. The war aims are clear. They are public. Henceforth all men know what the peace of victory will be. Those, therefore, who are not satisfied with them, can protest. But no protest is raised except by a few Socialists who find these terms too severe.

Have these war aims solemnly proclaimed to the world been modified since? Judge for yourself.

On January 6, 1918, the President of the United

Digitized by Google

States in an address to the Congress lays down "a programme for world peace," which has since become known as the "fourteen points." Much has been said about them, often by those who neither knew when they were first formulated nor what they meant. It is, therefore, relevant to give their substance here, presenting them in the same order as the eight points of January, 1917.

1. Evacuation and restoration of Belgium without any limitation of her sovereignty.
2. Evacuation of French territory; restoration of the invaded regions; reparations of the wrong done to France in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine.
3. Evacuation of Russian territory and a settlement leaving her entirely free to decide her own fate.
4. Readjustment of the Italian frontier in accordance with the principle of nationality.
5. Opportunity of autonomous development for the peoples of Austria-Hungary.
6. Evacuation and restoration of Roumania, Serbia and Montenegro with access to the sea for Serbia.
7. Limitation of Ottoman sovereignty to regions actually Turkish; autonomy for all the other peoples, international guarantees for the freedom of the Dardanelles.
8. An independent Poland with free access to the sea.
9. The creation of a League of Nations giving mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.
10. Impartial adjustment of colonial claims.
11. Exchange of guarantees for the reduction of armaments.
12. Elimination as far as possible of economic barriers; commercial equality for all nations.
13. Freedom of the seas.
14. Open diplomacy; no secret international agreements of any kind.

When on Jannary 9 this declaration, identical in meaning—especially as far as France is concerned—with the previous declarations of the Allies, was known in Europe, it met with nothing but approval and support. Parliaments and Press alike interpreted it as a further pledge of

Digitized by Google

America's unity of purpose, which everyone recognized to be essential on the eve of the great battle of the spring. French men saw in it also the first public recognition of their right to Alsace-Lorraine, without a plebiscite. Thus the intervention of the United States, far from modifying the war aims of the European Allies, confirmed and defined them. The divergence which later on it was attempted to establish between the former and the latter, vanishes in presence of a perusal of the documents. The Fourteen Points contain no contradiction of the previous programmes of peace. On the contrary they reiterate them. The United States did not conceive a peace different from that which Europe demanded. She defined in similar terms claims that were identical. No modification of the course followed was caused by her declaration. The only result was greater and more complete unity.

On October 6, 1918, Germany sued for peace. After three weeks of correspondence, made public day by day, President Wilson informed Germany that the Allies were ready to conclude peace on the basis of the terms set out above. Such the clear straight road which led from the formulation of Europe's war aims in 1916 and 1917 and their endorsement by the United States in 1918 to the Armistice in the beginning of November, 1919, and to peace. Never had a policy been clearer, more open, and more coherent. Everybody, before even the negotiations began, knew the objective sought. The peace, with all its principles and all its consequences, appeared clearly before the eyes of the nations, long ere it was drawn up and signed by the negotiators.

In other words, the peace was born of the origin and character of the war itself. It was willed by the peoples before being formulated by the Governments. It was formulated by the Governments as early as the end of 1916 in harmony with the instinct of the peoples and when, at the beginning of 1918, the United States in turn declared its conception of the peace it only emphasized principles which neither America nor anybody else could have varied,

Digitized by Google

for they were of the very nature of things and dictated by circumstances. Such being its source, the peace could not be a peace of conquest and of imperialism. If it was not a peace of conquest, it is not because of the Fourteen Points, nor because Mr. Wilson forced his will upon Europe, nor because the Allied Governments bowed before America through weakness or lack of foresight. It is because Mr. Wilson in his Fourteen Points, his speeches, like the Allies' declarations of 1916 and 1917, like the resolutions of the French Parliament of the same year, had merely obeyed the dictates of history, had merely registered the will of the warring peoples: it is because the Peace of Victory, offspring of the war, had necessarily to confirm and not to repudiate the ideals for which the war was fought.

The peace derives its whole character from this unanimity of purpose. And if in all of its chapters—whether they deal with frontiers or with new States, whether they deal with reparations or the internal affairs of nations—this character reappears, one may regret and disapprove, if one is of a Bismarckian or of an imperialist turn of mind, but nobody has the right to be astonished. For all through the war, all the Allies without exception, obedient to the peoples' will, had constantly proclaimed that, when victory was won, the peace would be made exactly as it was made.

II

Agreement on the principles of the peace was complete, even before the negotiations began; but to what extent was there agreement upon their application? In other words what had been the technical preparation for the peace?

Here again truth is singularly different from the artificial picture which political passion has conjured up to mislead the people. The peace was prepared as far as it possibly could be during the war. But this possibility had its limitations which cannot be forgotten. In France pre-

Digitized by Google

liminary studies had been begun by the various departments of the Government dealing with the clauses which interested them particularly. These studies were then coordinated by three special bodies. The first, the Comité d'Etudes, presided over by Ernest Lavisse, the great historian, and composed of university men and scientists, had presented memoranda supported by maps and statistics on all territorial questions relating to Europe and the Near East. The geographical, ethical, historical and political factors of these problems were thus collected and criticized in a manner which does honour to French science. Another committee, presided over by Senator Jean Morel, had drawn up exhaustive notes on the principal economic problems which the Peace Treaty was to solve. Finally, from December, 1918, to the end of January, 1919, I was entrusted by M. Clemenceau with the task of bringing together for the purposes of revision the members of the Comité d'Etudes and the representatives of the various Government departments to formulate definite conclusions which were reduced to writing and served as a basis for the French proposals. Great Britain, which had caused a similar study to be made by the General Staff, the Admiralty and the War Trade Intelligence, was in possession also of abundant material. For the United States, the Inquiry Boards which were under the direction of Mr. House, had undertaken from 1917 on, an examination of the peace problems with the assistance of distinguished professors, financiers and lawyers. Anxious to insure the greatest possible unity between the French and American viewpoints during the Conference, I had from the outset established a daily liaison between the Inquiry Boards and the corresponding services of the French High Commission which were under M. Louis Aubert. In addition, as early as October, 1918, five weeks before the Armistice, I had sent Professor de Martonne, the general secretary of the Comité d'Etudes, to the United States where he had compared our preparatory documents with those of the Inquiry Boards and reached entire agreement on many points.

Digitized by Google

Could more have been done? To preliminary studies made in common, could common conclusions have been added? Would it not have been the surest way, when the hour of peace struck, to gain time and to hasten the settlement? This has been asserted with that unruffled disregard for past realities which too often marks retrospective criticism. As long as the war lasted, the Powers, it is true, refrained from settling in detail the clauses of the Peace Treaty. Mere incuriousness? No, but, impossibility. The war almost to the very end was hard to wage and of uncertain issue. In July, 1918, with the enemy on the Marne and Paris under bombardment, was victory really certain? In order to win, the whole effort—and what an effort it was—had to be concentrated on turning the inter-allied machine which it had taken three years to build up and still moved creakily. The public knew nothing of these daily difficulties in the application of the principle of united action—so much talked about and so incompletely realized. But those who lived through them cannot forget. They know too what caution was necessary to solve these difficulties as well as to avert them.

Anyone who took part in the inter-allied discussions of July, 1918, on the Salonica expedition, on the transport of the American troops or on the number of British divisions in France knows full well how risky would have been—how dangerous even to victory—a parallel discussion of peace terms. It was not easy to get the Allies, even when they were bound by a common danger, to pull together for an immediate purpose. What would it have been, if at the same time one had stirred up and intensified by discussion those divergencies of views which the peace was to bring out? Never was the truth of the old common sense saying that each thing must be done in its turn and that everything cannot be done at once, more clearly demonstrated. By attempting to wage war and make peace at the same time, there was no certainty of achieving the peace, but there was a very great risk of losing the war. It was not attempted, and it is well that it was not. Was it even pos-

Digitized by Google

sible, working as we were in uncertainty and in circumstances which changed daily and whose course was shaped by our pursuit of victory and by that alone? Those who from the serene aloofness of their arm-chairs have answered the question in the affirmative, merely show their ignorance of the real conditions of war. Those on whose shoulders lay—at such a heavy hour—the responsibility of Government know that the attempt, doomed to failure, would have been nothing short of criminal imprudence.

The Conference meets. The men and the materials are gathered. The work awaits. What method shall be followed? In the early part of January, the French delegation had proposed a general plan of procedure which M. Clemenceau had asked me to prepare. This plan was as follows:

I

PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

The task of the Conference in bringing the war to an end is to prepare the new bases of international relation on the general lines laid down in President Wilson's Message of January 8, 1918, and in his speech of September 27, 1918, as well as in the reply of the Allies of November 5, 1918.

Under these circumstances the order of discussion might be as follows:

I. *Guiding Principles*:

a. Open diplomacy.

b. Freedom of the seas.

c. International economic relations.

d. Guarantees against the return of militarism and limitation of armaments.

e. Responsibilities for the war.

f. Restitution and reparations.

g. Solemn repudiation of all violations of international law and of the principles of humanity.

h. The right of nations to self-determination, together with the right of minorities.

i. An international organization for arbitration.

j. Statutes of the League of Nations.

Digitized by Google

II. *Territorial Problems*:

Delimitation of frontier between belligerents—new states created and neutral countries in accordance with:

a. The right of self-determination of peoples.

b. The right of nations weak or strong to equality in law.

c. The rights of ethical and religious minorities.

d. The right to guarantees against an offensive return of militarism, adjustment of frontiers, military neutralization of certain zones, internationalization of certain means of communication, liberty of the seas, etc...

III. *Financial Problems*:

Determination of the financial responsibility of the enemy in accordance with the rights of pillages and devastated regions:

a. Restitutions.

b. Reparations.

c. Guarantees of payment endorsed by an international organization.

IV. *Economic Problems*:

Establishment of a system which shall ensure for the time being to those nations which have suffered most from the aggression of the enemy equitable guarantees to be secured by an international control of

a. Exports.

b. Imports.

c. Ocean freights

and preparing for the future

a. An economic basis for international relations.

b. Economic penalties to be enforced by the League of Nations for the maintenance of Peace.

V. *Promotion of the League of Nations*:

Once these three types of problems have been solved in the order and in accordance with the principles stated above the two aims to be achieved will have been attained together.

a. The war will have been put an end to.

b. The principal foundations of the League of Nations will be laid.

It will then remain to:

a. Provide for the League's maintenance.

b. Codify such measures resulting from the guiding principles stated in the first paragraph, which may not have been covered by the treaty clauses dealing with territorial, financial and economic

Digitized by Google

problems (for instance open diplomacy, arbitrary and international organization, etc...)

II

PROPOSED ORDER FOR EXAMINATION OF TERRITORIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS

Among the territorial and political problems, distinction must be made between:

Those which must be solved first.

Those whose solution is only secondary, because facilitated by rulings made on the first.

Those for the solution of which delay is preferable.

Taking the above into account, the examination might proceed in the following order.

I. *Territorial Settlement with Germany.*

This is the essential problem dominating all others and its solution will react upon the entire rulings of the Treaty.

The French Government has already drawn up a preliminary proposal on this matter stating the principles, which might serve as a point of departure for the discussions of the powers.

A general clause will contain Germany's preliminary acceptance of rulings to be fixed later by the Allies and all the other states.

II. *Organization of Central Europe*:

Questions presented by the disappearance of Austria-Hungary and the Constitution of different States resulting from the former double monarchy.

a. Recognized States
   Poland
   Bohemia

b. States in formation
   Jugo Slavia
   Magyars
   German Austria

III. *Oriental Questions*:

a. Liberation of nationalities oppressed by the former Ottoman Empire:
   Armenia
   Syria and Cicilia
   Arab States
   Palestine

Digitized by Google

b. The question of Constantinople is a separate matter.

c. Delimitation of the frontiers of the Ottoman State.

The maintenance of a Turkish State is justified by the existence of a population mostly Turkish in the western and central portions of the peninsular of Asia Minor. This population desires to be governed by a national government and the principles of the Allies oblige them to take into account the expressed wish of the people.

IV. *Status of the Balkan Peoples*:

Frontiers of Bulgaria, Roumania, Greece and Serbia. This is one of the most complicated questions and a subject of the keenest controversy. It would seem preferable to deal with it after the settlement of the great German, Austrian and Oriental problems the settlement of which will clear away some of the difficulties and give the Powers greater freedom of action.

V. *Russian Problems*:

By dealing with this last, the nationalities will be given time to organize at least partially, to make known their wishes under more normal conditions and to proceed to the necessary agreements between the various ethical groups.

The variety of subjects calling for the attention of the heads of the delegations and the instinctive repugnance of the Anglo-Saxons to the systematized constructions of the Latin mind prevented the adoption of our proposal which only partially served to direct the order of work. The Conference created its various organizations one after the other instead of building them all up beforehand. Perhaps it was a mistake, but in any case France was not to blame. At the end of a very few weeks the whole organization was moving. I simply indicate its main outlines.

I. Executive Bodies:

a. A general Secretariat

b. A supervising Committee of the Powers

c. A drafting Committee

II. Commissions and Committees:

League of Nations

Responsibilities for the war and penalties with three sub-committees

a. Criminal acts

b. Responsibility for the war

Digitized by Google

c. Responsibility for violations of the rules and customs of war

Reparations for damages with three sub-committees

a. Valuation of damages

b. Capacity and means of payment

c. Measures of security and guarantees

International labour legislation

International regulation of ports, waterways and railways with two sub-committees

a. Transit problems

b. River labours and railway regulations

Financial questions with five sub-committees

a. Immediate requirements

b. Currency questions

c. Enemy debts

d. Inter-allied problems and plans of the financial section of the League of Nations

e. Payment of Austrian-Hungarian coupons

Economic question with nine sub-committees

a. Permanent commercial relations

b. Customs regulations, taxes and restrictions

c. Navigation

d. Unfair competition

e. Industrial ownership

f. Pre-war contracts

g. Liquidation of enemy stocks.

h. Foreign (former enemy) nations

i. Abrogation and renewal of treaties.

Aeronautics with three sub-committees

a. Military sub-commission

b. Technical sub-commission

c. Legal commercial and financial sub-commission

Central committee on territorial questions

Committee on Alsace-Lorraine

Committee on the Sarre Basin

Commission of Czecho-Slovakian affairs

Commission of Polish affairs with two sub-committees

a. Inter-allied mission to Poland

b. Commission of Teschen

Commission of Roumanian and Jugo-Slav affairs

Digitized by Google

Commission of Greek and Albanian affairs
Commission of Belgian and Danish affairs
Commission of Colonial affairs
Commission of sub-marine cable matters
Drafting Committee for military, naval and aerial clauses
Inter-Allied Military and Naval Committee
Supreme Economic Council with six sections
a. Blockade
b. Finance
c. Raw materials
d. Ocean freights
e. Food supplies
f. Means of communication

These fifty-eight groups included in addition to the plenipotentiaries and the heads of Government departments, men representing every type of human activity, lawyers, financiers, historians, manufacturers, business men, administrators, professors, journalists, soldiers and sailors who brought a wide personal experience to every problem along with the results of the preliminary studies in which nearly all of them had participated. These commissions, albeit organized as occasion demanded from day to day, responded none the less to the requirements of efficient organization. A very large amount of work, in committee meetings and in reports, was furnished by them. On every question a scrupulously fair hearing was given to all interested parties as often as they desired. More than fifteen hundred committee meetings were held, often supplemented by local investigations. It is the conscientious effort of these men that Mr. Keynes has sought to ridicule in his book on the Conference. "The poisonous morass of Paris," to cite but one of the least violent of his epithets, has naught to fear from his invective. Rarely was a political undertaking more honestly and more scrupulously prepared. I may add that despite the heat of certain debates all those who took part in it have retained one for another a great mutual esteem, the esteem of men of good faith and good will who in "a great adventure," as Mr.

Digitized by Google

House used to say, had dedicated their minds and their hearts to the most difficult of tasks.*

Complaint has been made, that on some points, and not the least important, the recommendations of the Commissions were not adopted by the heads of Governments. That is true. But could it possibly have been otherwise? Here again I appeal to realities. The peace was a political structure built by political bodies, known as nations. Besides it was the Peace—that is to say a work of harmony following on a period of strife. Two consequences resulted therefrom, consequences too easily forgotten now that the danger is passed. The first was that technical considerations had sometimes to give way, when the time came for decision, to considerations of general policy over which the experts had no control. The second was that to reach decision unanimity was necessary. The Peace Conference was not a deliberative assembly in which a majority could carry disputed points. Its conclusions, whatever they were, called for the agreement of all. This agreement could only be reached by sacrifices freely consented by each. Does anyone realize the immense difficulty of attain-

*I shall not waste time in this book on the insults addressed by Mr. Keynes to France, her representatives and her policy. I confine myself to noting once for all that this writer, whose contentions do not withstand examination in the light of the facts here set forth, condemns himself both by the violence of his words and the contradiction of his acts. The violence of his words? Here are a few samples: "Nightmare; empty and arid intrigue; puppet-show; carthaginian peace; the hot and poisoned atmosphere of Paris; the treacherous halls of Paris; the morass of Paris; insincerity; systematic destruction; Germany's outlawry; spoliation; imperial aggrandisements; ridiculous and injurious provisions; the policy of reducing Germany to servitude for a generation, of degrading the lives of millions of human beings, of depriving a whole nation of happiness; a destructive blow at the so-called international law; some preach in the name of justice; cavern; sophistry and jesuitical exegesis; dishonourable to the Allies in the light of their professions; dishonesty; the grossest spectacle; food for the cynic; imbecile and senseless greed; unveracity; crushing policy; policy of pretence; so contorted, so miserable negotiation; shame; false statement, breach of engagements and of international morality comparable with the invasion of Belgium; one of the most outrageous acts of a cruel victor in civilised history." When a man is right he does not write thus. As to Mr. Keynes' acts I will merely say this: "Mr. Keynes was attached as an expert to the British delegation up to June 9, 1919, that is to say for six months. Long before this date the Treaty drawn up with his collaboration contained all the features for which he has since criticized it so virulently. So he would have been better inspired if he had resigned a few months sooner instead of abusing to the end the confidence of those he was preparing to insult."

Digitized by Google

ing indispensable agreement? In my district just outside Paris there is a bridge built in the days of tolls. To do away with this irksome tithe only the consent of the two communes interested in the traffic is necessary; and yet for twenty years it has been sought in vain. For results to be attained from the work of the Conference it was necessary that on every question the greatest nations of the world should arrive at substantial accord. The mere statement of this condition gives the measure of the difficulty.

These men, whose unanimity was demanded by circumstances, represented nations separated by centuries of history. Great Britain and France, to mention but these, had been at war between 1688 and 1815 for sixty-one years out of a hundred and twenty-seven. All the others had each in its own country and in its own interest lived different lives which had given birth to conflicting interests. Immediate conflicts reduced to figures in economic and financial problems where one could not have more unless the other had less. Other conflicts, less immediate but far deeper, in public morals where the diversity of traditions had given birth to widely divergent conceptions and to irreconcilable contradictions of feeling and of thought. It was the dead of ages speaking and they did not all speak the same language. M. Clemenceau and those who helped him direct the negotiations for France had personal experience of this dangerous divergence of national temperaments. He characterized it in these words, which I reproduce:

> The state of mind of our Allies is not necessarily the same as our own, and when we are not in agreement with them, it is unjust to blame those who do not succeed in convincing them or to blame them for evil intentions which are not in their hearts.
>
> What are you going to do about it? Each of us lives encased in his own past. Auguste Comte said that we live dead men's lives and it is true.
>
> We are encased by the past which holds us in its grip, and spurs us forward to new efforts. Neither an Englishman, nor I, nor

Digitized by Google

anyone will cast off his historial way of seeing things and of thinking because he has contracted a temporary alliance with a foreign country.

... I had to do with these difficulties during the war. Take unity of command. Unity of command was achieved by several stages. Everybody did his bit. But the difficulty of bringing unity of command into being was much less than the difficulty of making it work, and that because of the different states of mind I have just mentioned.

The Peace Conference has only inherited states of mind from the various conferences of Versailles and from the meetings which preceded it.

How can a man be expected to renounce his past when he is sacrificing the blood of his countrymen to uphold it?

Men retain their virtues and their faults together. You must take them as they are. They are what they are. They have a past as we have a past. As far as I am concerned, merely because they differ from me even on very serious questions, I do not feel called upon to break with them as has been suggested.

There is the master difficulty. One could not break off... or only in such a manner that public opinion would immediately and unanimously lay the blame on those who broke off...

...It is said that when one is French, the right thing is to say, "I demand," and if the others refuse, to break; it was also said, "The right thing is to go before Parliament."

A fine reception I should have had, and how right Parliament would have been to receive me ill.

There should be no surprise at the resistance we have encountered. The one said or thought, "I am English"; the other thought, "I am American." Each had as much right to say so as we had to say we are French. Sometimes it is true, they made me suffer cruelly. But such discussions must be entered into not with the idea of breaking off, or smashing the serving tables and the china as was Napoleon's wont, but with the idea of making one's self understood.

That is why those who had the responsibility, and therefore the authority, gradually made such concessions as were necessary to final agreement. That is why the recommendations of commissions—some of which besides had not succeeded in reaching unanimity—were sometimes

Digitized by Google

brushed aside. France, I have the right to recall it, almost always supported the opinions of the experts. At the same time no country did more than France to pave the way for the necessary agreements. Technical preparations, political unanimity, these were the two poles between which the Conference revolved. There were deviations from one to the other. The straight line was not always followed. Let him who could have done better, cast the first stone! The truth is that on the one hand the essential factors were studied with a care not to be found in any of the great Congresses of history; and on the other that the decisions based thereon, when debated, were dominated by a spirit of harmony inherited by peace from war—that the sacrifices made were honourable concessions to the common purpose. On the one hand the commissions' laborious workshops where the materials were produced and stored; on the other, the "Big Four"—a mysterious Power used to scare popular credulity and who only exercised however the legal authority with which the nations had invested them. There is the Conference of Paris.

For the convenience of controversy, the story was widely circulated of the most formidable Treaty in history hurriedly improvised and thrown together by four fallible and ill-informed men, closeted in a dark room, imposing upon the world their whim as law. The time has come to meet this fable with the facts. The Treaty was studied, prepared and discussed for six long months by fifty-eight technical commissions on which sat the foremost specialists of each country which held 1,646 meetings. The conclusions of these commissions, verified by twenty-six local investigations, were discussed from January 10 to June 28 by three bodies: the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs which held thirty-nine meetings; the Council of Ten which held seventy-two meetings and the Council of Four which held one hundred and forty-five meetings. These three councils also gave hearings to the chairmen of the technical commissions, and all the representatives of Allied or neutral countries interested. Finally when at the beginning of

Digitized by Google

May, the texts were settled upon, the cabinets of the various Powers were called into consultation.

Such were the general conditions of the work of the Conference. I come now to the conditions in which its decisions were arrived at; that is to say to the very origin of this unprecedented Treaty which, after fifty-two months of war, restored peace to the world.

III

I have just mentioned the various groups who made these decisions: Council of Foreign Ministers, Council of Ten, Council of Four. Why so many? Why so interlocking? The former a question of procedure, the latter a question of principle. Both need answer.

And first of all why did not all the Powers summoned to Paris take part in the elaboration of the Peace? There were twenty-seven Allied Powers and four Enemy Powers. The admission of the latter to the preparatory discussions was not even suggested. There remained the Allies. Could they all be asked to sit? Evidently not. First because it would have been a regular parliament, the debates of which would have been interminable; then also because the positions of the various countries were not equal. The Big Nations have been accused of thrusting the smaller ones aside. But not to mention those who, without any act of war, had merely broken off diplomatic relations with Germany, nor those who, having declared war, had furnished no military effort, could it be maintained that, in the difficult work of giving expression to victory, the right of initiative should not be in some measure dependent upon the sacrifices made? Among the victors some had given everything, their soil, their blood, their treasure, not only to defend their own liberties but to win liberty for others. These latter on the contrary, despite the endurance of long sufferings, owed their resurrection entirely to the former. A classification was thus essential, and how can one challenge the justice of the distinction made, by a

Digitized by Google

protocol pregnant with reality, between the Powers of general and those of restricted interest? It enhanced the clearness and moderation of the debates. Moreover it was only just. Those who had borne the fearful burden of war were entitled to the privilege of determining, in accordance with the war aims accepted by all and in the interest of all, the general lines of the peace. M. Clemenceau at the second plenary sitting of the Conference, January 25, 1919, dealt with the question frankly on the occasion of a discussion on the composition of the commissions.

"Sir Robert Borden," he said, "head of the Canadian delegation, has in very friendly manner reproached the Great Powers with having made the decision. Yes, we decided in the matter of the commissions; as we decided to call the present Conference; and as we decided to invite the representatives of interested nations.

"I make no secret of it. A Conference of the Great Powers is being held in an adjoining room. The Five Great Powers whose action it is desired should be justified before you to-day, are in a position to furnish that justification.

"A few moments ago, the Prime Minister of Great Britain reminded me that the day the war came to a close, the principal Allies had twelve million soldiers fighting on the fields of battle. That is a title.

"We have lost, killed and wounded, by millions, and if we had not had present to our minds the great question of the League of Nations, we might have been selfishly led to consult ourselves alone. Who can say that we should not have been justified?

"Such was not our wish. We called together the entire assembly of the interested nations. We called them together not to impose our will upon them, not to make them do that which they do not want, but to ask their cooperation. That is why we invited them here. Yet we must ascertain how this cooperation is to be organized.

"Experience has taught me that the more numerous committees are, the less chance there is of getting things done. Now, behind us stands a very great, very august,

Digitized by Google

and at times very imperious force called public opinion. It will not ask us if such or such a state was represented on such or such a commission. That is of no interest to anybody. Public opinion will ask us what we have done. It is my duty to direct our work so that we may get things done."

Thus ordered, the Conference deprived no one of the right of being heard. All the countries represented, no matter how small, participated in the labours of the commissions, either as members or as witnesses. All were heard by the Great Powers, and the number of these hearings exceeds three hundred. But the direction of the work remained in the hands of those who had won the war. It was thus that on January 12, 1919, the body known as the Council of Ten met; it was composed of the heads of Governments and Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the United States, the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan. This Council sat twice daily from January 12 to March 24, dealing both with the peace and with such urgent problems of world politics as could not be left unsolved: application and renewals of the Armistice, food supplies for Europe; Russian affairs. The Council listened to the claims of the small nations. It settled the clauses of the disarmament of Germany. That having been done, it suddenly realized that six weeks had passed, that the end was not yet in sight and that with its ten members assisted by several dozen experts no headway was being made. Little by little everybody had got into the habit of making speeches. Matters were constantly being adjourned. That perfect frankness essential to obtain results was difficult in the presence of so large an audience. When anything leaked out, each delegation blamed the other for it. These were the reasons—and there was none other—why it was decided to narrow the circle. Thus the Council of Four, increased to five when the Japanese delegate was present, was formed and it was assisted in some of the less important matters by the Council of Five made up of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs. To what obscure manœuvres has the formation of these

Digitized by Google

two committees not been attributed? I have given the real reasons. They are self-sufficient.

This was the heroic period of the Conference; by reason both of the importance of the problems under discussion and of the extraordinary intensity of the effort put forth. From March 24 to May 7, the whole Treaty was put into shape: territorial, financial, economic and colonial clauses alike. Every morning and every afternoon, the four men met together, usually on the ground floor of the Hotel Bischoffsheim. In the garden an American "doughboy" stood sentry, wearing the insignia of the Conference, white scales on a blue ground. At other times the meetings were held at the Ministry of War in M. Clemenceau's dark and comfortless office. Habit had created its own laws. In the afternoon each man took the same seat he had occupied in the morning. Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary of the British War Cabinet, and Professor Mantoux, head interpreter of the French delegation, were the only others present. The plenipotentiaries and the experts came only from time to time. The tone was conversational. Neither pomp nor pose. Signor Orlando spoke but little; Italy's interest in the Conference was far too much confined to the question of Fiume, and her share in the debates was too limited as a result. It resolved itself into a three-cornered conversation between Wilson, Clemenceau and Lloyd George—an amazing contrast of the three most widely different natures that it is possible to conceive. Always sincere and straightforward, these interviews were at times almost tragic in their solemn simplicity and would then relax into something approaching gaiety when agreement was in sight. History will record with approval that even in the most difficult hours the "Four" always spoke the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

I shared their life too closely to be able to judge them. Who better than I knows their shortcomings? I have no taste to blame them; for I saw them give the very best of their great minds to their task, and what more can one ask? I have no right to praise them. I shall but try to redress,

Digitized by Google

in as few words as may be, the wrong done by the outrageous pen of a subordinate and disgruntled employee. I shall brush aside the legend that one of these three men hoodwinked the others. In France it has been said that Clemenceau was the dupe of Wilson and of Lloyd George; in the United States that Wilson was the plaything of Lloyd George, and in England Mr. Keynes has written that M. Clemenceau turned the trick alone. This childish and contradictory explanation, convenient to politicians, must be abandoned. The exaggerated honour or the insult which it implies to the three leaders must be repudiated. The truth is that from the first day to the last, with a deep desire to reach agreement, the discussion proceeded foot by foot. I have already explained why.

The discussion between men whose national and individual temperaments were utterly opposed was naturally exceedingly keen. President Wilson discussed like a college professor criticizing a thesis, sitting bolt upright in his armchair, inclining his head at times towards his advisers, developing his views with the abundant clearness of a didactic logician. Mr. Lloyd George argued like a sharp-shooter, with sudden bursts of cordial approval and equally frequent gusts of anger, with a wealth of brilliant imagination and copious historical reminiscences; clasping his knee in his hands, he sat near the fireplace, wrapped in the utmost indifference to technical arguments, irresistibly attracted to unlooked-for solutions, but dazzling with eloquence and wit, moved only by higher appeals to permanent bonds of friendship, and ever fearful of parliamentary consequences. As for M. Clemenceau, his part in the discussion was thoroughly typical and in very many instances his views prevailed. His arguments instead of being presented by deductive reasoning like those of Mr. Wilson or of exploding incidentally like those of Mr. Lloyd George—proceeded by assertions weighty, rough-hewn and insistent, but clothed with gentle words that did him credit and refulgent with emotion which at times was overpowering. Mr. Keynes has had the face to find fault with him for

Digitized by Google

seeking first of all to place France beyond the reach of German aggression: it is the criticism of a man who has understood nothing of the history of Europe during the past fifty years and whose insular egoism cannot grasp what invasion means.

This period of history is closed. Most of the men who dominated it are retired. This gives me the greater freedom to say that the lesson of the war was not lost upon them, that despite their deep differences of opinion they were animated by an all-powerful unity of purpose, by a spirit of real understanding. "We entered here united," M. Clemenceau used to say, "we must leave here brothers." France and her spokesman did all they could to bring this about. They had a hard time of it. To give effect by common agreement to the essential bases of peace—restitution, reparation and guarantees—what toil and labour therein lay! Complete harmony crowned their work with success. It is easy to pretend that the policy of France was a "punic" policy: the mark of the beast is upon our devastated region and tells on which side were the Carthaginians. It is easy to taunt President Wilson with having adapted his principles to the pressing demands of reality, although as a matter of fact they were not his principles alone but the principles of all of us and not one of them was violated: this brand of sarcasm comes from those who in the solitary seclusion of their firesides build in their own minds an imaginary world from which living, suffering and achieving humanity is arbitrarily banished. It is easy to make capital out of Mr. Lloyd George's contradictions: no one has suffered more from them than France. But in justice it must be added that in the most serious times those who knew how to talk to the British Prime Minister could always bring him back to fundamental principles. The infinite sensitiveness of his mind, his passionate love of success, led him to improvise arguments which did not always bear examination or were too exclusively pro-British. But when a man who enjoyed his respect answered the bold suggestions of his quick brain with those permanent

Digitized by Google

truths which he had momentarily deserted, he came back to them when the time arrived for final decision. These three men, for whom needless to say I have not the same personal feeling, forced upon me the same conviction about them all; the conviction that in their unheard-of task they managed to maintain and make even closer the bonds that bind our three countries, the breaking of which would spell disaster to civilization. They only did so with great difficulty. In their search for essential unanimity, they sometimes discovered that they neither knew one another well nor understood one another fully. Nevertheless they reached agreement, and reached it by open, straight and honest paths. This I assert, and I assert it because I was there and others who have said the contrary were not.

And then there were minor criticisms. Fault was found that the Council of Four had no official secretariat. In the first place, all its decisions were minutely recorded. In the second, bureaucratic paper-mongers nearly cost us the war. Later on, in 1920, they nearly compassed the "sabotage" of the Peace. Thanks are due to those who discussed things freely without thought of protecting themselves by and with a set of minutes! Fault has been found with the time spent in discussion. The Conference of Paris began on January 12, 1919. The Treaty was in the hands of the Germans on the seventh of May. It was signed on June 28. There is no instance in history of a work of this magnitude accomplished so rapidly. The Congress of Vienna lasted fifteen months; the Congress of Westphalia five years,—and in each case the task was less. If my personal experience of the negotiations has left any regret in my mind, it is that at times things were done too quickly. Fault has been found that, contrary to diplomatic tradition, the Treaty of Peace was built without the classic propylæum of a preliminary treaty. Perhaps it would have been better if a summary treaty had followed close upon the Armistice. This is what the French delegates had at first proposed. Circumstances made it impossible. These preliminaries could have been signed neither before the

Digitized by Google

fifteenth of February when Mr. Wilson left for Washington and Mr. Lloyd George for London, nor during the absence of M. Clemenceau who was wounded by an assassin on the twenty-first. When everybody met again on March 15, the progress made by the commissions justified the hope that the work would soon be finished, as it was in fact six weeks later when the Treaty was ready, and the idea of preliminaries was abandoned. It was also abandoned for two other reasons. The first was that a preliminary, that is to say a provisional and incomplete Peace would have encouraged the already active campaign for immediate demobilization which everybody realized was both necessary and dangerous. The second was that President Wilson, anxious to have only one draft and not two to submit to the U. S. Senate and desiring also not to dissociate the ratification of the Peace from the ratification of the League of Nations, insistently urged the abandonment of preliminaries and the immediate preparation of the final Treaty of Peace. The ratification of the Treaty by the U. S. Senate was a matter of so many and such keen apprehensions to the European Powers, that they did not even think of disregarding on a question of procedure the formal desire of the President of the United States. That is why the preliminaries were abandoned and the final treaty prepared.

Fault has also been found with the four heads of Governments who have been accused of assuming a task which was not theirs, and having thus delayed the settlement. "The Armistice was signed on November 11," say these critics, "and the Conference did not begin until January 12, two months later. If delegates had been chosen who were neither heads of States nor Prime Ministers, if it had not been necessary to wait first for Mr. Wilson who was obliged to prepare for his departure and then for Mr. Lloyd George who was held up by his elections, two months would have been gained." Does anyone really believe that the private conversations of the month of December were not

Digitized by Google

of importance?* Does anyone really believe that without them certain of the French claims which were opposed by the British delegation would have found that moral support in American quarters which ensured their ultimate success? But above all does anyone really believe that it would have been possible to do the work that had to be done except by those who had full responsibility and sovereign power of decision? Would the ablest and most distinguished of officials been equal to it? This question can be answered by experience. Half of the commissions when they really got to the heart of the problems they were asked to solve, hesitated to make decisions of principle which it was perfectly evident could only be taken by the heads of Governments.

Beyond doubt—and fault was found with them for this also—the fact that they were the heads of Government obliged the men who made the peace to give part of their time to the current affairs of Europe and of the world. There was nothing to do about it; and besides does anyone really believe that these current affairs, all closely linked

*In connection with these preliminary discussions in December, 1918, it is only right to destroy a legend which has found almost as many believers as that of "peace was possible in 1917" and which is quite as untrue. I refer to the so-called deal said to have been made in London between Mr. Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George, the former giving up "Freedom of the Seas" in exchange for British support of the League of Nations. It is a fabrication, pure and simple. "Romancing," as M. Clemenceau said. There was not in London in December, 1918, any deal or negotiation on the subject of the "Freedom of the Seas." Mr. Wilson held that with the League of Nations established there would be no more neutrals and that the problem of neutrality discussed for centuries in connection with the Freedom of the Seas no longer arose and could not arise. The President of the United States moreover made a public statement on this subject in the spring of 1919. Besides agreement was complete between the three heads of the Governments of the United States, of France and of Great Britain on the subject of the decisive services rendered by the naval power of Great Britain. M. Clemenceau said so plainly on September 26, 1919, in the Chamber of Deputies in the following words: "Mr. Lloyd George said to me: 'Do you admit that without the British fleet you could not have continued the war?' And I answered: 'Yes.' Mr. Lloyd George had added: 'Are you disposed to prevent us in case of war doing the same thing again?' And I answered: 'No.' Well now I repeated this conversation to President Wilson. It did not in the least disturb him. President Wilson answered me: 'I have nothing to ask you which could displease or embarrass either of you.' " Already then Mr. Wilson was convinced that the League of Nations by itself sufficed to solve the problem. Mr. House in a letter of October, 1920, was so kind as to confirm that no negotiation whatever took place on this subject in London at the end of 1918.

Digitized by Google

with the peace itself, did not gain from being administered by the men who were working on the peace? Europe kept on living. Her life was hard indeed, beset with material and moral difficulties. These difficulties could not wait. The food supply of Europe had to be provided for without delay; political and national conflicts had to be settled forthwith; special bodies to deal with these matters—like the Armistice Commission at Spa, and the Supreme Economic Council,—had to be created and directed and supervised. No one but the heads of Governments could do all this. It took time but it saved time also. What would have happened if they had not done it? What would have happened if famine had been allowed to decimate Germany and Poland? What would have happened if revolution in Hungary, in Bavaria and elsewhere had been allowed to run its course unheeded? So really there was no alternative. Had these realities been laid aside for the exclusive preparation of the Treaty, the peace would have been delayed and compromised. Theorists may deplore the "super-government" set up in Paris in 1919 to their hearts' content. It was a necessity.

Such the work of the Four. France may well be proud of the part she played, ever firm and friendly. No one has ever stated that the methods adopted were all perfect. But that they were adequate to a tremendous task, is proved by the results. It was cheap and easy to caricature this immense undertaking to suit one's own purposes. The truth stands by itself. I am trying to tell it here.

IV

I have perhaps waited too long to tell it. It would have been better to have spoken earlier. Another of the faults found with the Conference of Paris was that it surrounded itself with mystery. I am inclined to the belief that, in this respect, a mistake was really made. I hold that the Conference was weakened by its aloofness. Here again I feel impelled, even though I might prefer otherwise, to relate exactly how this came about.

Digitized by Google

The representatives of the Powers, great and small, arrived in Paris in December, 1919. An impressive array of journalists accompanied them; more than three hundred from the United States alone. The Press, thus mobilized, had tremendous expectations. Were not the events of yesterday and of to-morrow of unprecedented importance; had not the fullest publicity been promised? Did not the first of the Fourteen Points explicitly accepted by all the Powers as the basis of the peace, read: "Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view." Before negotiations even began, the Conference backed water. The President of the United States—he said it himself—had never intended open negotiations but only open debates upon all decisions arrived at before the latter became final. There was no question of full publicity of the negotiations. The first care of the Conference in organizing its relations with the Press was to strike an even balance between the need for silence and the need for news.

At once—as early as January 12—M. Clemenceau who had supported the creation of the Press Club of the Champs-Elysées to facilitate the work of the newspaper men took his stand.

"There is a general expectation and wish by the public that all the subjects of our discussion shall be published. We have the greatest interest in showing the public the results of our work."

Right then and before agreement had even been reached on an official text, the difficulties began which for six months grew and multiplied as one incident followed another. The Conference was held in Paris. If it had not been, the French Government would have been accused of not properly defending our rights. Because it was held in Paris, the position of France was singularly delicate. A distinguished member of the Allied Press said to me one day:

Digitized by Google

"We are your guests. Whenever the Press is not satisfied, it will put the blame on you."

This was true of the Press. It was also true of all the men who were making the Peace. They felt that the hospitality extended to them by France entitled them to special protection. A hundred times prior to the signature of Peace from the greatest to the last, they showed this spirit. The Censorship made things worse. M. Clemenceau on assuming office in November, 1917, had said: "No censorship of articles; they may attack me as much as they like"—a right of which full advantage was taken—"but suppression of news dangerous to the interior and exterior security of France." Our Allies never understood this distinction. Need I add that, if they were usually indifferent to false news, items against which we could take action, they were unduly sensitive to criticisms and malicious attacks against which we were powerless.

On January 15 the first friction arises. Mr. Lloyd George complains of insinuations published in certain French newspapers. President Wilson goes even further and although representing a country in which censorship had been abolished immediately following the Armistice, asks that the French censorship should be exercised not only over the French newspapers but also over despatches sent to foreign papers. M. Clemenceau opposes a friendly refusal and the next day, as a hint for forbearance, lays upon the table an extract from the *New York Tribune* even more lacking in exactness and courtesy. Such incidents reappeared frequently. Towards the end of March, following the publication of articles in *l'Echo de Paris, le Journal* and *le Temps,* Mr. Lloyd George indignantly denounced these "leaks" and demanded condign punishment. He added:

"If this kind of thing is to go on, I shall cease to take part in the work of the Conference."

M. Clemenceau, it may be contended, had but to take him at his word. But what would have been said if, with Germany looking on, the head of the French Government

Digitized by Google

had failed to smooth over incidents of this kind, or had displayed that "impulsiveness" for which he was always being criticized when he was not being accused of "weakness"?

The reasons which led to the strict limitation of news given to the Press during the discussions of January, 1919, deserve to be known. The French Government—which suffered most from an ill-informed Press which honestly gave currency to the criminal statements of a dishonest Press—was the last to underrate the importance of these reasons. In the first place the members of the Conference had to accomplish their unprecedented task under the very eyes of the enemy—for an armistice is not peace. The elaboration of a treaty after a war which had brought seventy million men to grips and cost twelve hundred thousand millions, the elaboration of a treaty between twenty-seven nations on one side and four on the other was not so simple as it is the fashion to pretend now that the work is done. Any false step might have led to disaster, might have increased the difficulties between the Allies and Germany. Any indiscretion might have been made capital of in Berlin as in Paris, might have prolonged a task which all were ready to criticize as too slow, might have jeopardized, if not the result, at least the speed of its accomplishment. Besides—and Mr. Lloyd George's remarks on this subject were irrefutable—the aim of the negotiations was agreement between the Allies. How many historical differences —as M. Clemenceau so clearly explained to the French Parliament—made this agreement difficult; not as far as principles were concerned but in matters of interpretation and application.

"If the Press," said Mr. Lloyd George, "intervenes in the early stages of the negotiations, it will crystallize opinions and agreement will be made more difficult."

This agreement, I repeat, could not be reached by a vote of the majority,—unanimity was necessary; as it had been in the inter-allied councils of war where final decisions were reached by gradual adjustment and would have

Digitized by Google

been impossible if the exchange of views had been paralyzed by publication from time to time. Unanimity was necessary so that to the very last moment everyone might remain free to modify or develop his thought without closing the door to mutual concessions from which only agreement could come. Finally to admit the Press to the development of the negotiations would have been to admit politics; it would have been to furnish, week by week, materials for parliamentary questions on the formative stages of the work of the Conference; it would have been to add the fuel of parliamentary controversy to the flame of Conference discussions. Mr. Lloyd George, although his majority in December had been overwhelming, first called attention to this danger. M. Clemenceau, although he had received many votes of confidence, knew to what extent national problems would be used by some for political ends. Mr. Wilson, since the fifth of November, had been in a minority in his own Congress. Here again the highest interests of the negotiations counselled prudence. This view was adopted by the heads of Governments.

After a few meetings, a line of action was settled upon. On January 16, it was decided to consult the newspapermen themselves who very naturally asked to be admitted everywhere. But on the seventeenth, it was decided to admit them only to the plenary sittings, it being understood that the discussions between the Great Powers were merely conversations and that the sittings in which the smaller Powers took part were private. The same day, an appeal was made to the patience of the Press in an eloquent statement which forcefully epitomized the above arguments. On the other hand the members of the delegations were requested not to furnish newspapermen with any information. The *communiqué* issued by the Secretariat would alone be official. The die was cast....The Conference was to continue its weighty task surrounded by the indifference or the hostility of the Press. Mr. Balfour, Mr. Pichon and I tried to mitigate the impression caused by receiving newspaper men at stated hours. When in

Digitized by Google

March the discussions were begun in earnest and attention became concentrated on points of capital importance, the Supreme Council asked us to abandon these receptions. When one realizes to what extent some of our statements had been misinterpreted, and how delicate the negotiations had become, this request is easily understood. However that may be, the weeks from March 15 to April 30 were singularly agitated in Press circles. Mr. Lloyd George tried giving out interviews but without avail, for on fundamental matters everyone's lips were sealed by fear of making agreement more difficult. The newspapers were discontented and made up for the inadequacy of their information by the prodigality of their criticism. The public, ill-informed and distrusted, lost interest and became suspicious. This continued till the end of the Conference.

In April the question arises whether the conditions of peace shall be published before being handed to the Germans or simultaneously. M. Clemenceau insists upon their publication.

"It is inadmissible," he said, "that our countrymen should be obliged to read the Treaty in *the Berliner Tageblatt.*"

Alone of this opinion, M. Clemenceau is obliged to give way to the majority and only a resumé is published. In May and June, the same question arises. The United States Senate first received and then a French newspaper published the full text of the Treaty. Nevertheless it is decided to await the signature. In July, the parliamentary debate begins. M. Clemenceau asks for authority to communicate to the Commission presided over by M. Viviani the minutes of the Committee of the League of Nations. Again unanimous refusal. Treaties are public property, but the preparation of treaties must remain secret. This will be known to history as the doctrine of the Conference of Paris.

I have stated the facts. What conclusions or lessons can be drawn from them? It is necessary first to clear away the objection so frequently put forth that "If the pub-

Digitized by Google

lic had been informed, France would not have been obliged always to give way to her Allies." It must be cleared away, because it is false that France always gave way; on the contrary her views generally prevailed. But on the other hand it is certain that silence did great harm to the Treaty in the public mind. It harmed it more in France than anywhere, although in the United States the damages were at least as apparent. Parliamentary debates were inadequate to enlighten the people. Who reads the *Journal Officiel* or *Hansard* or the *Congressional Record*? Besides a few speeches were not sufficient to explain in detail the continuous effort of six months. Constant publicity would have been necessary. Thus the door was opened wide to misstatement and to falsehood. The paramount necessity —vital to all the Allies but especially vital to France—of maintaining in peace the bonds of friendship forged in war, the long and laborious efforts to this end, the sacrifices made to it by all without exception, were not understood. Political campaigns took advantage of this ignorance.

Could more have been done? No, out of regard for our Allies. Neither the conversations exchanged nor the texts discussed by the Conference were the exclusive property of France. To publish, divulge, repeat these things without the consent of all concerned would have been improper and dangerous. No foreign Parliament has advanced any such pretension. The House of Commons asked nothing. The United States Senate, despite the heat of its political struggles, did not take advantage of its right to send a delegation to Paris. And when the French Government suggested, in July, that certain records should be communicated to our Parliamentary Commissions, the Allies were unanimous in their friendly but formal reminder that the common rule must be respected. M. Clemenceau did not feel that he could disregard their wishes in the matter.

This may be regretted. M. Clemenceau told the Chamber that he regretted it. I regret it as much as he does. We are democracies, and democracies must know in order

Digitized by Google

to be able to will. It is certain that our French Democracy, because it did not know enough, was the defenseless victim of those who preached the failure of the peace. It is no less certain that when I go over each item and ask myself, "Could we have spoken?" I am tempted to reply, "No!" The Treaty, had it been more quickly and more thoroughly explained, would have been better understood. But by multiplying the echoes of dissension the danger would have been great that there would be no Treaty at all. That is the whole question.

V

Thus time passed, from the end of December, 1918, to the beginning of July, 1919. A time of complexities and of difficulties, a time of overwhelming work and responsibility but also of inspiring effort and result; a time often dramatic. I have explained the inner workings of the machine. I shall now attempt to show the extent of its output.

Something of the wild exhilaration of the Armistice which soon sobered down into a tranquil optimism had marked the first meeting of the Conference. Excessive optimism prevailed as to agreement on the application of principles; excessive optimism prevailed as to the power of this imposing group of victors to control the actual course of events. I have told how France proposed a programme of work which had been rejected as too hard-and-fast and systematic. The Anglo-Saxons preferred to deal with the most pressing matters first. So the Russian question was taken up, with what naive hopes later events have shown. Then there was the hopeless failure of Prinkipo, vainly prophesied from the first by M. Clemenceau. Then—all the while attempting to disarm Germany and to draw up the pact of the League of Nations,—we began to hold meetings for information. Interminable statements, many of which revealed an alarming Imperialism on the part of the most recent beneficiaries of victory, were listened to without discussion. About this time the United

Digitized by Google

States and Great Britain both calling for the presence of the heads of their respective Governments, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George had to go away. Five days later, M. Clemenceau was struck down by an assassin and had to retire temporarily with a bullet in his lung. It was a fallow and discouraging time, a time of difficulties and of vain disputes over questions of procedure—modified Armistice, preliminary terms of Peace or Treaty. However, inside progress was being made. The commissions were filing their reports in quick succession. By the end of March, their work was about completed. It was at this moment that the Council of Four which met for the first time on March 24, took up this material. In six weeks of continuous effort, they were going to clear away the underbrush, lay the foundations and build up the Treaty.

Then discussions began. Calm and unruffled on most points, bitter and stormy on three of the most important to France: the left bank of the Rhine, the Sarre Valley and the question of reparations. These three points took up long sittings and led to fierce debates. Furthermore on certain occasions two tendencies began to appear which foreshadowed future difficulties. France, usually supported by the United States, demanded that the accepted principles of the Peace be unwaveringly applied: restitutions, reparations, guarantees.

"We were attacked," said M. Clemenceau, "we are victorious. We represent right, and might is ours. This might must be used in the service of right."

Mr. Lloyd George did not say no. Indeed, he sometimes urged exemplary severity, as for the punishment of the Kaiser and his accomplices or to force payment of the expenses of the war. But at times also his parliamentary obsession would come over him. Under the influence of some of his assistants—such as General Smuts—or after breakfasting with some Labour Leader, he would arrive at the meeting looking glum, and announce, "They will not sign." That was his great anxiety. It led him to write

Digitized by Google

long Notes in which he laid down for himself and recommended to his allies a policy of extreme moderation.*

"We must have," he kept repeating, "a German Government that will sign. The one now in power is but a shadow. If our terms are too severe it will fall. And then look out for Bolshevism."

At the end of March this obsession became so threatening to the most vital clauses of the Treaty† that M. Clemenceau felt called upon to meet it with uncompromising directness which Anglo-Saxons accept, because they consider it fair and which impresses them far more than shifting resistance. On his instructions I drew up a Note in which Mr. Lloyd George's point of view was refuted step by step. It read:

March 31st.

I

The French Government is in complete accord with the general aim of Mr. Lloyd George's Note to make a lasting Peace and for that a just Peace.

It does not believe on the other hand that this principle, which is its own, really leads to the conclusions deduced from it in this Note.

II

This Note suggests granting moderate territorial conditions to Germany in Europe in order not to leave her after the Peace with feelings of deep resentment.

This method would be of value if the last war had merely been for Germany an European war, but this is not the case.

Germany before the war was a great world power whose "future was on the water." It was in this world power that she took pride. It is this world power that she will not console herself for having lost.

Now we have taken away from her—or we are going to take away from her—without being deterred by the fear of her resentment—all her Colonies, all her Navy, a great part of her merchant

*See specially his Note of March 26, 1919.

†See Chapters V, VIII and IX.

Digitized by Google

Marine (on account of Reparations), her foreign markets in which she was supreme.

Thus we are dealing her the blow which she will feel the worst and it is hoped to soften it by some improvement in territorial terms. This is a pure illusion, the remedy is not adequate to the ill.

If for reasons of general policy, it is desired to give certain satisfactions to Germany, it is not in Europe that they must be sought. This kind of appeasement will be vain so long as Germany is cut off from world politics.

In order to appease Germany (if such is the desire) we must offer her colonial satisfactions, naval satisfactions, satisfactions of commercial expansion. But the Note of March 26 merely contemplates giving her European territorial satisfactions.

III

Mr. Lloyd George's Note fears that if the territorial conditions imposed on Germany are too severe, it will give an impetus to Bolshevism. Is it not to be feared that this would be precisely the result of the action suggested?

The Conference has decided to call to life a certain number of new States. Can it without committing an injustice sacrifice them out of regard for Germany by imposing upon them inacceptable frontiers? If these peoples—notably Poland and Bohemia—have so far resisted Bolshevism, they have done so by the development of national spirit. If we do violence to this sentiment, they will become the prey of Bolshevism and the only barrier now existing between Russian Bolshevism and German Bolshevism will be broken down.

The result will be either a Confederation of Central and Eastern Europe under the leadership of Bolshevist Germany or the enslavement of this same vast territory by Germany swung back to reaction after a period of general anarchy. In either case, the Allies will have lost the war.

The policy of the French Government is on the contrary to give strong support to these young nations with the help of all that is liberal in Europe and not to seek at their expense to attenuate—which besides would be useless—the colonial, naval and commercial disaster which the Peace inflicts on Germany.

If in order to give to these young nations frontiers which are essential to their national life, it is necessary to transfer to their sovereignty Germans, the sons of those who enslaved them, one may

Digitized by Google

regret having to do this and do it only with measure, but it cannot be avoided.

Moreover, by depriving Germany totally and definitely of her colonies because she has ill-treated the natives, one forfeits the right to refuse to Poland or to Bohemia their natural frontiers on the ground that Germans have occupied their territory as the forerunners of Pan-Germanism.

IV

The Note of March 26 insists—and the French Government is in complete agreement—on the necessity of making a Peace that will appear to Germany to be a just Peace.

But it may be remarked that taking German mentality into consideration, it is not sure that the Germans will have the same idea of what is just as the Allies have.

Finally it must be retained that this impression of justice must be felt not only by the enemy but also, and first of all, by the Allies. The Allies who have fought together must conclude a Peace which will be fair to all of them.

But what would be the result of following the method suggested in the Note of March 26?

A certain number of full and final guarantees would be ensured to the maritime nations which have never been invaded.

Full and final cession of the German colonies.

Full and final surrender of the German Navy.

Full and final surrender of a large part of the German merchant Marine.

Full and lasting, if not final, exclusion of Germany from foreign markets.

To the continental nations, however, that is to say to those who have suffered the most from the war, only partial and deferred solutions are offered.

Partial solutions such as the reduced frontier suggested for Poland and Bohemia.

Deferred solutions such as the defensive undertaking offered to France for the protection of her territory.

Deferred solutions such as the proposed arrangement for the Sarre coal.

There is here an inequality which may well have a disastrous influence on the after-war relations between the Allies, which are more important than the after-war relations between Germany and the Allies.

Digitized by Google

It has been shown in Paragraph I that it would be an illusion to hope to find in territorial satisfactions given to Germany a sufficient compensation for the world-wide disaster she has sustained. May it be permitted to add that it would be an injustice to make the weight of these compensations fall upon those of the Allied nations which have borne the brunt of the war.

These countries cannot bear the costs of the Peace after having borne the cost of the war. It is essential that they too shall have the feeling that the Peace is just and equal for all.

Failing this, it is not only Central Europe in which Bolshevism may be feared, for as events have shown, no atmosphere is more favourable to Bolshevism than that of national disappointment.

V

The French Government desires to confine itself for the time being to these considerations of general policy.

It pays full homage to the intentions which inspire Mr. Lloyd George's Note, but it believes that the considerations which the present Note deduces from it are in accord with justice and the general interest.

It is by these considerations that the French Government will be guided in the coming exchange of views during the discussion of the terms suggested by the Prime Minister of Great Britain.

Mr. Lloyd George is ardent; but he has a good heart and a keen sense of justice. After a few hard words—face to face—the distance between the two points of view grew less and that of France made headway. The problem of the Sarre was the first to be solved early in April with the cordial assistance of the British Prime Minister. That of the left bank of the Rhine was solved on April 22, despite his repeated objections. The agreement on reparations was reached at about the same time and on the evening of May 6 the text of the Treaty was delivered by the printers. Thanks to steps taken by France, the name of Italy appeared upon it although news of the return of her plenipotentiaries had been received only the night before. On the seventh afternoon the terms of peace were solemnly handed to Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau. The German made a cold, harsh and insolent speech. As we were leaving Mr. Lloyd George, exasperated, said to me:

Digitized by Google

"It is hard to have won the war and to have to listen to that."

A few days passed and the German counter-proposals began to come in. The first received were met almost without discussion by negative replies couched in firm and determined language. Already the Austrian Treaty was being taken up. It looked as though everything was settled with Germany once and for all.

As a matter of fact, the second and most serious crisis of the Conference was at hand. It lasted from May 25 to June 16. The British Cabinet held two meetings in the last week of May which renewed and redoubled all the fears which the Prime Minister had felt in March. These fears were not as a matter of fact confined to him alone. Even in France many who have since become uncompromising then favoured concessions. Men repeated "Will they sign?" And some suggested a general back-down in order to induce them to sign. Those were atrocious days. Mr. Lloyd George, thoroughly alarmed by the consequences either of a refusal to sign or of a crisis in Germany, suggested unthinkable concessions on almost every point. He excused himself for doing it so tardily. He spoke of consulting the Commons. The work of two months was threatened with ruin. M. Clemenceau stood firm. If there was to be a break, he would go before the French Chamber and resign.

"We know the Germans better than you," he declared, "our concessions will only encourage their resistance while depriving our own peoples of their rights. We do not have to beg pardon for our victory."

President Wilson did not demand any change in the political clauses of the Peace and did not insist on the changes in the financial clauses which were suggested by his experts. Nevertheless no final decision was taken. Oppressive hours; exhausting sittings from which men emerged broken. On June 10 to force the issue I addressed to Mr. House the following letter which he showed the same evening to President Wilson:

Digitized by Google

June 10, 1919.

My dear friend,

Very grave mistakes have been made during the past week: there is only just time to repair them.

For more than five months the heads of Governments and their experts have studied the terms of the Peace to be imposed on Germany. They have reached an agreement and they have communicated to the Germans a text which, if it does not yet bind Count Brockdorff—in any case unquestionably binds the Allies.

Could the Allies suppose that this text would be satisfactory to Germany? Of course not. However, they adopted it. Germany protests, as it was certain she would. Immediately a modification of the text is undertaken. I say this is a confession of weakness and a confession of lack of seriousness, for which all the Allied Governments will pay dearly in terms of public opinion! Is it an impossible Treaty? Is it an unjust Treaty? Count Brockdorff believes that it is. If we change it, we admit that we think as he does. What a condemnation of the work we have done during the past sixteen weeks!

Mr. Lloyd George has said, "But they will not sign and we shall have a thousand difficulties." It is the argument we heard so often during the war—after the battle of the Marne, after Verdun, after the German offensive in the spring of 1918, people said in all of our countries, "Let us make peace to avoid difficulties." We did not listen to them and we did well. We went on with the war and we won it. Shall we have less heart for peace than we had for war?

I add that these public discussions between Allies over a Treaty drawn up between Allies weaken us more every day in the eyes of an adversary who respects only firmness (see the reports from Versailles which arrived to-day).

Thus on the general principle my opinion is this: a week ago, we ought to have answered the Germans, "We will change nothing." If we had only made this answer, the Treaty would be signed to-day. We did not do it. What ought we to do now?

As regards the special principles about which amendments are being considered, what is the position?

Reparations? The British who made the first suggestion of amendment are with us to-day against any modification and it is your delegation which proposes (along with other changes which France cannot possibly accept), a total figure of 125 thousand

Digitized by Google

million francs which would barely cover as far as France is concerned the two-thirds of the specific damages, reparation for which is imposed on Germany by a text of May 7. We will not accept it.

League of Nations? We have laid down after four months of study the conditions in which Germany may enter the League. Are we going to change them? Are we going to confess that our decision falls before the observations of Count Brockdorff? How after that could we defend the Treaty before our respective Parliaments?

All these vacillations, which were repeated in the matters of the Sarre and of the left bank of the Rhine, were the results of the initial mistake. But let me add another word.

No one has the right to ask France to accept such terms. France has an unique experience of Germany. No one has suffered as she has. It is useless to think of persuading France to accept such close cohabitation with Germany in the near future in violation of the text of the Covenant, first of all because France will not accept it and then because it is not just.

When the question arose of giving a hearing to the Irish, every one gave way to the British objections. When the question arose of Japan's status in the League of Nations, every one gave way to the American objections. When dealing with Germany it is France that must be heard.

But above all I would not have the moral position of the Allies sacrificed to the Brockdorff memorandum. I would not have them subjected to the unjustifiable humiliation of admitting that the peace built up by them after more than four months of incessant labour is, as Germany asserts, an unjust and impossible peace, for this is contrary to the truth.

Signed: André Tardieu.

Towards the end of June the atmosphere began to clear. Reason—represented by France—resumed her rights. The amendments suggested a fortnight before gradually vanished one by one. On the sixteenth the Allied answer to the German Notes was handed to Count Brockdorff. Drawn up by Mr. Lloyd George's own secretary—Mr. Philip Kerr—it was on every essential point the eloquent expression of the ideals which France had upheld for five months. I will cite only its more salient passages:

Digitized by Google

In the view of the Allied and Associated Powers the war which began on August 1, 1914, was the greatest crime against humanity and the freedom of peoples that any nation calling itself civilized has ever consciously committed...

Germany's responsibility however is not confined to having planned and started the war. She is no less responsible for the savage and inhuman manner in which it was conducted...

The conduct of Germany is almost unexampled in human history. The terrible responsibility which lies at her door can be seen in the fact that no less than seven million dead lie buried in Europe while more than twenty million others carry upon them the evidence of wounds and suffering because Germany saw fit to gratify her lust for tyranny by resort to war.

The Allied and Associated Nations believe that they will be false to those who have given their all to save the freedom of the world if they consent to treat this war on any other basis than as a crime against humanity and right...

Justice, therefore, is the only possible basis for the settlement of the accounts of this terrible war. Justice is what the German delegation asks for and what Germany has been promised. Justice is what Germany shall have. But it must be Justice for all. There must be Justice for the dead and wounded and for those who have been orphaned and bereaved that Europe might be freed from Prussian despotism. There must be Justice for the people who now stagger under war debts which exceed thirty thousand million pounds, that Liberty might be saved. There must be Justice for those millions whose homes and lands, ships and property German savagery has spoliated and destroyed. ..

Not to do justice to all concerned would only leave the world open to fresh calamities. The Treaty is frankly not based upon a general condonation of the events of 1914-1919, it would not be a peace of justice if it were.

As such the Treaty in its present form must be accepted or rejected.

On June 28, at Versailles, in the Hall of Mirrors, on the very spot where Bismarck had proclaimed the German Empire in 1871, MM. Hermann Muller and Bell, replacing Count Brockdorff who had resigned, signed the Treaty identical in all its fundamentals with the text of May 7. The fight was won.

Digitized by Google

In the succeeding chapters I shall show what these fundamental principles mean to the future of France and of Europe. The foregoing reveals one of the features which characterize its importance. It is that the Treaty born of long and arduous discussion could not bring to all who signed it the realization of all their expectations. The victory had been the work of a coalition. The peace which ended the war was, like the war itself, the work of a coalition, that is to say, a compromise in which all made sacrifices and reduced their demands to a minimum,—a minimum because the capacity for construction is less than the capacity for destruction, a minimum because the very origins of the war and the promises made during the war in view of peace precluded the possibility of certain traditional solutions of annexation and brutality to which the experience of centuries had accustomed warring peoples, a minimum because between so many Allies justly entitled to claim a share in the victory it was inevitable there should be in peace as in war divergent and often contradictory ideas and tendencies, traditions and hopes, sometimes even ambitions.

Thus in the very hour when every national entity wrought up by suffering and by victory aspired to the full satisfaction of their every hope, the Treaty could be but a compromise,—a compromise not only between conflicting claims but a compromise too between principles which are plain and facts which are complex—a compromise between glories and miseries, between memories and hopes, between strength and weakness—an average of security, of justice, and of solidarity which doubtless did not realize and could not realize complete security, full justice nor absolute solidarity but which nevertheless contained enough of security, enough of justice, enough of solidarity to make it the power towards which turn all, in their search for peace, both those who have most severely criticized it and those who have most inadequately enforced it.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

THE DISARMAMENT OF GERMANY

ALL through the war, the Allies proclaimed, as first among their war aims, the destruction of German militarism. The instrument of aggression forged by the elder Moltke, increased and strengthened by his successors, had filled Germany with that insensate pride which inspired her crime of 1914. German militarism was as formidable materially as it was morally pernicious. After having fashioned its weapons, it built up its faith. Maker of rifles, of machine guns and of cannons, it had given birth to a philosophy. Defeat had overwhelmed it, but—prompt in deceit—it had taken pains to hide defeat beneath the triumphal arches raised in all German towns in honour of the beaten and retreating Army. Had but the instrument of aggression survived, in five years—in ten years—in twenty years, it would have meant certain war. It was necessary to break it—to break it in its three essentials: in its organization, in its man power, in its armament. It was necessary to wrest from Germany both the means and the temptation of war; to reduce in the immediate present her military state to the minimum compatible with the necessities of her defense and the maintenance of order; to give in the future to peaceful nations the means of verifying Germany's compliance with the clauses of the Treaty imposed upon her. An immense task, which Napoleon—the conqueror of Prussia, occupying all of its territory—had attempted without success but which, however, it was the Allies' duty to undertake and to carry through, if the world was to be saved.

The Armistice had begun the disarmament of Ger-

Digitized by Google

many. It was far from having completed it. To achieve their aim, the negotiators of the peace had a long way to go. I have already told why Marshal Foch had not thought right to demand either the demobilization of the German Army or its total disarmament in the field.* I add that, even in the matter of partial disarmament considered sufficient by the inter-allied High Command, errors of calculation had been made. In the letter of October 26, 1918, the Commander-in-Chief had estimated the 5,000 cannon and the 30,000 machine guns the surrender of which he demanded, as respectively one-third and one-half of the enemy supplies, which means that at the moment of the Armistice Germany was believed to have 15,000 cannon and 60,000 machine guns. But on January 5, 1920, the German Government, while asserting that it had destroyed a large part of its war material, admitted that it still had 24,625 cannon or tubes and 41,318 machine guns. However that may be, the heads of the Allied Governments in the beginning of 1918 became alarmed at the force which still remained at Germany's disposal and—in the various renewals of the Armistice in January and February, 1919, as well as in the elaboration of the Treaty itself—they unanimously sought in conjunction with the military authorities the means of further disarming Germany.

By January 15, 1919, the whole war material which Germany was to surrender under the Armistice of November 11, 1918, was in the hands of the victors. But it was clear to all that Noske, the Minister of War of the German Reich, was endeavoring in a thousand ways to elude the clauses which he foresaw would be inserted in the Treaty. There were threatening concentrations of troops on the Polish frontier. The manufacture of war material continued. Innumerable undemobilized units were kept in the dépots. New formations were created under all sorts of pretexts:—volunteers, surety police, technical aid corps and others galore, who with their machine guns and their cannon cooperated to a disquieting extent in the mainte-

*See Chapter II, page 66.

Digitized by Google

nance of order. At the meeting of the Conference on January 23, 1919, Mr. Lloyd George, voicing the unanimous feeling, declared that this situation could not be allowed to continue:

"The Germans," he said, "are demobilizing slowly. They have still more than fifty divisions. Why do we not make them demobilize quicker? Why was this condition not imposed on them in the Armistice of November 11? Why not introduce it next time when the Armistice is to be renewed on February 16? It is essential in some way or other not only to oblige Germany to reduce without further delay, the number of men she has under arms but also to take from her the war material she still has."

Everyone was of the same opinion. But the formula remained to be found. M. Clemenceau recalled the fact that, if the demobilization clause did not appear in the Armistice of November 11, it was because Marshal Foch had declared it to be impossible of execution, as it could not be controlled. The following day, January 24, the Commander-in-Chief, summoned to the Conference, declared:

"We can insert in the next Armistice a clause imposing upon Germany a thoroughgoing demobilization of men and material. But it will be very different to verify and enforce, and the results are more than doubtful. The only means of pressure is first of all for us to keep strong forces mobilized and as a second and additional means there is the blockade."

Then began a period of laborious effort which lasted three weeks, in which much work was done without tangible result. Three commissions were appointed one after the other to inquire into and report upon this question. The first, appointed on January 24, included besides M. Loucheur, the Chairman, Mr. Winston Churchill, Marshal Foch and Generals Bliss and Diaz. The second, appointed on February 8 to simplify the suggestions of the first, was composed of Mr. Lansing, Lord Milner and myself. The third, presided over by Marshal Foch, included as military

Digitized by Google

members representing the Supreme War Council, Generals Bliss, Degoutte, Thwaites, Cavallero and Colonel Nagai; as civilian members representing the Supreme Economic Council, Lord Robert Cecil, Norman Davis, Clementel, Crespi and Mori. The Commanders-in-Chief of the Armies and Navies were present at the meeting of the latter on February 10.

The object to be accomplished by these various committees was the same: to exert on Germany, at the time of the renewal of the Armistice, sufficient military and economic pressure to force her to demobilize her forces and surrender her war material. But it very quickly appeared —and this explains the appointment of three commissions in succession—that there was a divergence of view both on the means to be employed and on the conditions to be imposed.

The French delegates sought only to disarm Germany and to enforce this whether she wished it or not. They therefore proposed that the next Armistice should enforce the reduction of the number of her divisions, the surrender of a further slice of her war material, the Allied control of her thirteen principal war factories; finally and above all, as an ultimate penalty for non-compliance, the occupation of the industrial region of Essen. These proposals were advanced both by M. Loucheur in the first commission and by myself in the second. They were simple and self-sufficient.

The state of mind of our Allies was more complex. The idea of introducing into a renewal of the Armistice terms which were different from those of the initial Armistice, was repugnant to some of them, especially to the Americans,—and they made no secret of it. In vain, we replied that, if the Armistice had been concluded for one month only, it was precisely in order to reserve to the Allies the right of changing the conditions. Our contentions found no support. Others sought by the demobilization of Germany to facilitate the repatriation of their own troops and the hastening of their own demobilization. All of them, what-

Digitized by Google

ever their reasons, were equally hostile to a further occupation of German territory and agreed in their conclusions which were, it is true, to oblige Germany to demobilize. But to add to the military and economic means of pressure the bait of certain concessions in the matter of food supplies and raw material, in order to obtain demobilization, would have transformed the renewed Armistice into a species of bilateral contract, would have mortgaged the future conditions of peace and have left the Allies open to German blackmail.

Thus the difficulties grew. M. Clemenceau, no less harassed by Parliament than were his foreign colleagues, was as anxious as anybody to accelerate the demobilization of the French Armies by immediate disarmament of Germany. He was as anxious as anybody also that the Allies should retain to the very end of the negotiations a military force superior to that of Germany and this added to his anxiety to reduce the strength of the German Army. But at no price was he willing to consent that this should be at the cost of losing, while the war was still on—for an armistice is not peace—the advantage of the Allies' position as conquerors by a give and take arrangement, which, before their peace conditions had been accepted, might undermine their authority.

A difficult time indeed, as I have said above, often a painful time, in which the head of the French Government was forced, on four or five occasions, to intervene personally and with all his might to insure that the renewal of the Armistice would preserve the character he was anxious to give it and avert a dangerous bargaining. After a dozen meetings, it was agreed that while pursuing by some other means the disarmament of Germany, we would confine ourselves in the renewal of the Armistice on February 16 to making her feel the pressure first by demanding the immediate halt—which was obtained—of her preparations against Poland, and then by renewing the Armistice only for a short and undefined period with the right for the Allies to bring it to an end at any moment on three days'

Digitized by Google

notice. No mention was made of disarmament. Neither was any mention made of food supplies. Thus was preserved in the document handed to the Germans the military character of the Armistice.

As to the reduction of the German forces, it was decided that we should bring it about without further delay not by means of the Armistice but by fixing as quickly as possible the final military conditions of the peace. Immediately on his return from Treves, on February 17, Marshal Foch was asked to hasten the study of these clauses. In the last week of February, the work of the Military Commission was brought to a close. Its report was distributed on March the first.

II

We appeared to be reaching the end. The desire to reach a conclusion was unanimous. And yet so great is the difficulty of attuning views based upon conflicting traditions, interests and habits of mind that two more weeks passed before agreement was reached on a text. I lay special stress upon this illuminating incident. If the difficulty was so great when no divergence of principle separated the Allies, it can be judged what the debates were like when they were at variance on the principle.

On every point and without ill intention on the part of anyone, discussions arose over points of detail which had to be settled before progress could be made. One day, on February 22,—in the absence of M. Clemenceau, grievously wounded the day before by an assassin—it was suggested that the military clauses as soon as they were ready should be handed to Germany without waiting for the others. From his sick-bed the French Premier answered that this was impossible and in his name the French delegation in full accord with Marshal Foch showed that the military clauses could not be separated from those which would fix the frontiers of Germany, the situation of the Rhenish Provinces, the occupation, etc.. Another day, on March the third, it was maintained that the disarmament of Germany

Digitized by Google

should only be of limited duration. An entire meeting was necessary to dispose of this suggestion, Marshal Foch very pertinently recalling that President Wilson, who was then on the high seas, had asserted the "moral right" of the Allies to disarm Germany completely. M. Clemenceau, who had resumed his place as President, added:

"We must know what we want and say it. Otherwise we are living in a dream and reality will be avenged."

On another occasion, the American delegates put forward the idea of "guaranteeing the neutrality" of a disarmed Germany. Here again M. Clemenceau refused, declaring that he was not willing to risk the life of a single French soldier to guarantee Germany anything. Some of these debates were strenuous, at times even dramatic. No progress was being made. At last on March the sixth the discussion of the report of the Military Committee presided over by Marshal Foch began. The plan presented left Germany an army of 200,000 men recruited by conscription on a one-year service plan, five army corps staffs, fifteen divisions, 180 pieces of heavy artillery and 600 field pieces. Immediately Mr. Lloyd George, supported by M. Clemenceau, put the vital question:

"Germany," he says, "will train 200,000 men a year or two million in ten years. Why make her a present of a system which in fifteen or twenty years from now will give her millions of trained soldiers to mobilize?"

To the objection of the military experts, who answered that an army based upon long term enlistment would be a nursery of officers and non-commissioned officers, Mr. Lloyd George replied:

"Officers and non-commissioned-officers? Germany as a result of the war has more than enough for fifteen years to come and if she trains 200,000 men a year, you may be quite sure that at the end of ten years she will have formed a hundred thousand non-commissioned officers."

It was self-evident. The suppression of compulsory service was decided upon; the military experts were invited to resubmit by March 10 a plan thus amended.

Digitized by Google

This plan—the principle of which the Technical Commission continued to oppose—was submitted on the day named to the Supreme Council. No more conscription: twelve years engagements: strength of 140,000 men; war material reduced in proportion. Immediately and insistently M. Clemenceau and Marshal Foch demanded a further reduction to 100,000 men.

"I insist with all the strength at my command," said the French Premier, "for it is France who to-morrow as yesterday will be face to face with Germany."

Agreement was quickly reached. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. House despite certain objections of their technical advisers declared:

"If France expresses a formal opinion in this matter neither Great Britain nor the United States has the right to oppose her wish."

The German Army was therefore limited to 96,000 men and 4,000 officers and its rôle restricted to the maintenance of internal order and the policing of her borders. At the request also of the French delegation, the General Staff was suppressed as was also the heavy artillery: the supplies of munitions diminished by half; an inter-allied commission to supervise disarmament appointed; time limits for compliance with the various clauses fixed as follows:

1. *Within two months after the coming into force of the Treaty.*

Art. 167.—Delivery to the Allies for destruction of all the war material whatsoever exceeding the authorized quantities, as well as all machinery designed for war manufacture, with the exception of such as may be recognized as necessary for the arming and equipment of the German military forces authorized.

Art. 176.—Suppression of Military Schools.

Art. 180.—The disarmament of fortifications within the demilitarized zone.

Art. 198.—Demobilization of all the personnel of the Air Services.

Art. 202.—Surrender of all the aviation material.

Digitized by Google

2. *Within three months after the coming into force of the Treaty.*

Art. 263.—The reduction of the total effective force to 200,000 men.

Art. 168.—Prohibition to manufacture arms or war material of any kind elsewhere than in factories authorized by the Allies. Suppression of all other factories and arsenals.

Art. 172.—Revelation of secret processes.

Art. 221.—Modification of German military legislation in accordance with the Treaty.

3. *Within four months after the coming into force of the Treaty.*

Art. 180.—Dismantling of the fortifications in the demilitarized zone.

4. *Before March 31, 1920.**

Arts. 160-163.—Complete compliance in all respects of the German Army with the dispositions of the Treaty (reduction to 100,000 men).

Art. 166.—Limitation and warehousing of all munition stocks.

Art. 170.—Prohibition to import or export war material.

Art. 171.—Prohibition to manufacture poison gases, tanks, etc.

Art. 173.—Abolition of compulsory service.

Art. 175.—Status and number of officers.

Art. 177.—Prohibition for schools and athletic associations to concern themselves with military questions or to have any connection with the Minister of War.

Art. 213.—Right of the League of Nations to exercise supervision.

Arts. 42 and 43.—Complete demilitarization of the Rhine region.

This was drafted Chapter V of the Peace Treaty. However improved it may have been by the debates from March 3 to 12, this chapter did not yet provide France—invaded twice in fifty years—with sufficient security. Furthermore it was necessary that the military, if not the political, frontier of Germany be fixed in such a manner that neither the left bank of the Rhine, nor the bridges, nor the neighboring zone of the right bank should ever again be used

*By decision of the Supreme Council on February 12, 1920, the date was extended to July 1, 1920, owing to the delay in the coming into force of the Treaty which did not occur until January 10, 1920.

Digitized by Google

against France as the offensive military base it had been in the past. It was also necessary that once the military clauses had been enforced by the competent Inter-allied Commissions, any eventual violations thereof by Germany should be made the object, not only of verifications of the facts, but also of official inquiries to be provided for by the Treaty itself. Finally it was necessary that, so long as Germany should dispose of several million men trained to war—men who had actually fought—the occupation of the left bank and of the bridgeheads would provide our country a natural guarantee.

The total demilitarization of the left bank of the Rhine and of a zone of fifty kilometers to the east of the river was accepted from the first and was not made the object of any discussion. The definitive formula thereof was drafted in the clearest terms by President Wilson in a Note of March 28, which the final enactments of the Conference reproduced almost literally. This Note was drawn up as follows:

Stipulations to Be Embodied in the Treaty

(1) No fortifications west of a line drawn fifty kilometers east of the Rhine (as already provisionally agreed upon in the military terms).

(2) The maintenance or assembling of armed forces, either permanently or temporarily, forbidden within that area, as well as all manœuvres and the maintenance of facilities for mobilization.

(3) Violation of these conditions to be regarded as hostile acts against the signatories to the Treaty and as calculated to disturb the peace of the world.

In a separate Treaty with the United States.

(4) A pledge by the United States, subject to the approval of the Executive Council of the League of Nations, to come immediately to the assistance of France as soon as any unprovoked movement of aggression against her is made by Germany,—the pledge to continue until it is agreed that the League itself affords sufficient protection.

The question of the further control to be exercised was more lengthily discussed. To reduce Germany to the mili-

Digitized by Google

tary status imposed by the Treaty, commissions were provided for. But their rôle was temporary and, the reduction of German forces to the figures of the Treaty once achieved, these commissions would disappear. For the future something else was needed. What? Not merely the ordinary military Intelligence Services possessed by all countries, but an official body that would have the specific right to make inquiries in Germany and to suggest measures based on its investigations. This was a matter which aroused the keenest attention of the Anglo-Saxons. Asserting at every turn their desire not to interfere in any way, once peace was signed, in the internal affairs of Germany, they considered that a permanent right of control over her military institutions would affect her sovereignty.* Such was certainly not the object of the French proposal. Still it was none the less essential that some kind of a body should be provided for, with power to verify the military execution of the peace. On five occasions, M. Clemenceau insisted on this necessity without obtaining a decision. On March 22, I handed to Colonel House a Note summing up the problem. It is proper that it should be published in full although up to the present it has remained secret.

NOTE FOR COLONEL HOUSE

March 22, 1919.

I

The Treaty, in which is incorporated the Covenant of the League of Nations, recognizes that the immediate disarmament of Germany is necessary and institutes a control to make sure that the disarmament clauses will be carried out.

Germany, once disarmed, is it admitted that she can re-arm? That is the question.

To this question a satisfactory reply can be made only by inserting in the Treaty the right of the League to assure itself that Germany is not re-arming.

*A proposal to organize a general supervision of armaments, presented in February by Mr. Léon Bourgeois at the League of Nations Commission, had been rejected by twelve votes to three.

Digitized by Google

Failing this, the League would confess to working for only six months, or eighteen months, which would be disastrous.

II

This truth is easy to prove.

The League wishes to compass the at least partial disarmament of its members. If one subordinates this disarmament of its own members to the disarmament of non-member nations without having the right of supervision over these latter, a weak instrument is being drawn up, dangerous and absurd, and all the weaker, more dangerous and more absurd since the bad faith of Germany has been the more clearly established.

It is said: "The Military Attachés will exercise this supervision." That is not exact.

In actual practise, to begin with, everyone knows that Military Attachés only obtain *officially* such particulars *as it is desired to give them* or those which are already public property. In 1914 they were without exact knowledge either as to the number of German Reserve Corps or as to the importance of heavy artillery.

Will it be said that the Intelligence Departments could procure these particulars? But these services have limited means. Furthermore one cannot invoke them without making them known, and their reports have *no official value* vis-à-vis those of a Foreign Government.

If, therefore, the League of Nations, having learned in one way or another (Military Attachés or Intelligence Services) that Germany is secretly violating the Disarmament clauses, wishes to make representations to her on the subject, the German Government will be justified in replying, "Your information is false" and her denial will be sufficient for the League to be disarmed.

Will the League say to Germany, "Prove that my information is false," or even, "We wish to verify."

But then it is claiming a right of supervision and Germany will reply: "By what right?"

That is what Germany will reply and she will be justified in so replying, if she is not forced by the Treaty to recognize the right of verification.

In a word, if this right is not given by the Treaty, Germany can always re-arm.

It will be objected perhaps that preparations for war by a great

Digitized by Google

nation like Germany cannot pass unnoticed. But between *complete disarmament* and *complete preparation* there are many intermediate stages which are none the less a danger and may more or less circumscribe plans to break up the future political status of Europe.

Where will the forbearance of the League end and when will it begin to take necessary precautions if the *uncertainty* about what Germany is doing and preparing cannot be *officially dispelled*?

III

This situation, perilous because of Germany, will be dangerous also for the members of the League.

If a right of verification is not given to the League by the creation of a body for that purpose, what will happen, in the case where the Governments composing the League would not be in agreement as to German preparations?

There may be serious divergencies either between the facts reported by their agents or their interpretation thereof. This has happened and is constantly happening.

How can the difficulty be solved?

Another danger: the Pacifist element in each of the Nations of the League will be quite naturally inclined to deny reports disturbing to their peace of mind and more or less consciously to espouse the cause of the German Government which will deny the said reports. Must we recall the opposition of these Pacifist elements at the time when Germany armed to the teeth was openly making ready for the aggression of 1870 and that of 1914?

To sum up, the situation will be the following:

—Germany *will deny*

—The governments *will discuss*

—Public opinion will be *divided, alarmed, nervous,* and finally, the League unarmed will have brought to pass in the world not general Peace but general uncertainty which may give birth to all kinds of interior and exterior conflicts

It is important in this matter to lay down the principle and to assert the right.

Let care be taken to avoid vexatious proceedings in the exercise of after-war supervision, and let use be made, as agents officially recognized by Germany, of military attachés or other agents of the League, on which we are agreed:

But to deny the principle itself of this right of supervision by

Digitized by Google

the League of Nations and not to embody it in the Treaty to be signed by Germany, this would amount to giving the whole world and our enemies of yesterday the very clear impression that nothing durable has been achieved and that we are ever ready to turn back to the past.

Signed: André Tardieu.

Days passed—without a decision. Sometimes we were told that our demand was excessive: sometimes that it was useless: always that such a provision of so special a character could not find place either in the Covenant of the League of Nations, nor in the Franco-British and Franco-American Treaties of Guarantee. In a Note of April 2, we had presented the draft of a clause worded as follows:

If one of the signatory Powers considers that Germany has violated any of the above clauses (demilitarization of the left bank of the Rhine and of 50 kilometers on the right bank, and the military clauses) it will have the right to bring the matter before the Executive Council of the League of Nations which will at once proceed to verify the facts stated. Germany undertakes to submit to the said verification made in the interest of peace and to facilitate its execution.

On April 12, in a Note of reply, President Wilson maintained his refusal and wrote:

With regard to the added paragraph concerning the right of the signatory Powers to notify the Executive Council of the League of any violations of these regulations, which might have been observed, it is clear that the right already exists, on the part of members of the League, if any action is taken anywhere, which threatens to disturb the peace of the world and that it would be unwise to connect it with this special agreement and treaty.

It was once again proof of our failure to agree. But for the first time, the door was open to agreement. Leaving aside the Treaties of Guarantee we asked by a Note of April 15 that the article proposed by us should figure in the military clauses of the peace. We showed that it was a matter of necessary precaution and closely allied to all the objects of the Conference. We wrote:

Digitized by Google

April 15.

What does France demand? That the precision and strength added by the special Franco-British-American Treaty to the general clauses of the League of Nations, in case of a German attack shall be incorporated in some part of the Peace Treaty in case of preparation for such an attack.

In other words, it is a matter of giving article XIII of the Covenant, as regards possible preparations by Germany, the same complement as the special Treaty gives to article X.

The British and American Governments which have so justly understood that France has need of an additional guarantee against the realization of a German attack, will certainly admit that the same additional guarantee should appear in the preventative methods to be opposed to this attack.

The President considers that it is not proper to insert this clause in the special Treaty with Great Britain and the United States. The French Government is quite ready to abide by this opinion.

But it insists that, either in the Covenant of the League or in the military clauses of Peace, this provision shall appear.

The common work of Governments needs the ratification of Parliaments and of peoples. The clause asked for will do much for this ratification as far as France is concerned.

In this matter the position of the French Government is identical with that which prompted the American Government to introduce an amendment to the Covenant touching the Monroe Doctrine. This also is a question of public feeling.

The introduction of such a provision seems particularly easy.

In fact:

1° Article X sets forth that the members of the League undertake to respect and preserve against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all the members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of aggression the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obligation shall be fulfilled.

To this general provision the special Treaties of Great Britain and of the United States add a precise undertaking, the object being, in case of danger, to shorten the formalities and gain time.

2° Article XIII provides for the right of investigation by the Council. The State under suspicion and about which investigation

Digitized by Google

is to be made must submit to it, if not by terms of the article XVI it may be outlawed.

This article might also be supplemented by a precise provision.

What is needed indeed in the second case as in the first is to gain time,—but precision is not less necessary.

Germany is, of all the nations not members of the League, the only one capable of letting loose an irreparable catastrophe—irreparable, if not as far as final victory is concerned, at least as regards the security of French soil.

For this reason, we are justified in forcing Germany by the Peace Treaty to submit to investigation which alone can prevent her from placing France and the League in presence of a *fait accompli.*

Our argument at last met more favourable reception and prevailed on April 17. On that day President Wilson offered to us a formula which we accepted immediately.

As long as the present Treaty (with Germany) remains in force, a pledge to be taken by Germany to respond to any inquiry that will be deemed necessary by the Council of the League of Nations.

This was the very object of our proposition. To avoid the delay which might have been brought about by the necessity of a unanimous vote of the Council of the League of Nations, we merely asked—and it was consented to without discussion—that the Council, in this case, "would act by a majority vote." After a month of efforts, we were at the goal. The general security of the world gained as much thereby as the security of France.

III

The right of occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and the Treaties of Guarantee with Great Britain and the United States were to complete the measures taken for the common defense of the "Frontier of Freedom." These two problems, by reason of their importance, are dealt with in special chapters,* wherein is written the final upbuild-

*See Chapters V and VI.

Digitized by Google

ing of the work of defense, the necessity of which was emphasized by the history of the last century.

A new work this: to break and bridle the military power of the most military people in the world. The work has been undertaken and accomplished with courage, and in a manner worthy of our great soldiers. We have struck at the head by suppressing the Army Military Staff, the schools, the plans of mobilization. We have struck at the base by suppressing conscription and by reducing the effectives to 100,000 men serving for twelve years. As to war material, we have suppressed the right to retain or to manufacture heavy artillery, tanks, aviation, gas. We have allowed only 288 field cannon manufactured in factories chosen by the Allies, supervised by them, and of which they can limit the number. Was it possible to go further without affording grounds for the objection often put forward by our Allies, "Then, we must protect and safeguard Germany."

Doubtless a danger remains: fraud, camouflage. Eternal danger—which Napoleon, occupying all Germany and incorporating it in his Armies, did not succeed in doing away with. After Jena, Leipzig. To avert it, everything has been done that could be done. Effectives? Articles 160 to 163 of the Treaty give us arms to put an end to the cunning dispersion which, under the names of *Reichswehr*, of *Sicherheitspolizei*, of *Einwohnerwehr*, of *Nothilfe*, has reconstituted in Germany at the beginning of 1920 an army of nearly a million men. War material? Supervision is, and will be, necessary. Article 213 authorizes us to this by placing our complaints before the League of Nations, whose procedure has been simplified to this end. Furthermore, the clauses relating to the Rhineland—neutralization and occupation—are not a negligible guarantee. Unless all Germany is to be occupied and administered entirely, could one, I repeat, go further?

The effort accomplished may be gauged by figures, and I have summed it up in the following table:

Digitized by Google

SITUATION OF THE GERMAN ARMY

	Before Armistice	After Armistice	After Project of March 3	After Project of March 10	After the Treaty	Reduction effected Columns 1 & 5
Men	5,500,000	1,300,000	191,000	134,000	96,000	98 %
Officers	140,000	40,000	9,000	6,000	4,000	97 %
Infantry Divisions	218	55	15	11	7	96.7%
Army Hq. Staffs	17	5	1	1	None	100 %
Divisional Hq. Staffs	71	7	5	4	2	97 %
Heavy Artillery	7,200	4,700	180	None	None	100 %
Field Artillery	9,000	6,500	600	432	288	96.8%

Almost all the successive reductions, brought out in this table, are the work of the French delegation and particularly of its chief. It is M. Clemenceau who, from the first draft to the final text, reduced the number of men by 50 per cent., of infantry divisions by 54 per cent., of officers by 56 per cent., of Army Staffs by 60 per cent., of heavy guns by 100 per cent., field guns by 54 per cent., and the amount of munitions by 50 per cent. He it is who suppressed the Army Staffs retained by the military experts. This progress, slowly realized, was not always easy; not indeed that there was not always entire agreement between the Allies on the necessity of disarming Germany, but because this agreement ever easily reached on negative measures was more hesitating in the case of positive action; and also because too often the shibboleths of technique were an obstacle to the dictates of common sense.

It is M. Clemenceau also who, at the end of May, when Count Brockdorff-Rantzau put forward his counter-proposals, prevented their acceptance. Some, out of fear of Bolshevism, urged concessions, either on the time limit of execution or on stated figures. One day, the military experts proposed to grant to Germany 200,000 men instead of 100,000. On June 8, a Technical Committee composed of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, Generals Bliss, Desticker, Cavallero and Naro, suggested to authorize during the first three months that would follow the entry of the Treaty in force, 300,000 men instead of 200,000. Unswervingly the French Government refused, for the good of all, to enter on

Digitized by Google

this dangerous path, and at M. Clemenceau's request the reply handed to the Germans on June 16 maintained absolutely the full wording of the military clauses, such as had been communicated on May 7 previously.

However appreciable this result, the value of these guarantees has none the less been discussed—and how bitterly. Let us admit that this value cannot be absolute; it remains that, compared to the precedents that history furnishes, the situation brought about by the Treaty connotes an advance which cannot be over-estimated; it remains that these guarantees taken as a whole strengthen and increase the importance of each of them. Modern wars—the last has only proved it too well—are waged not by armies alone but by whole nations not on "the front" only, but in "the rear;" by the entire country; by the mobilization of all its forces—man power, material, financial, naval, industrial, commercial and moral. The base of security under these circumstances is to know whether the Army left to Germany by the Treaty of Peace and the military status imposed upon her thereby, will enable her unknown to the Allies to plan and to accomplish this complete mobilization of all the national forces, which is the essential condition of modern warfare. If Germany cannot under the cloak of her Army of 100,000 men successfully carry out this complete mobilization essential to success, Germany is not to be feared—because she cannot make war. To prepare herself for it, she would be obliged to resort not only to secret and isolated infringements of such or such clauses of the Treaty, but to infringe them in every direction and on a scale so plain, so evident and so glaring that for her conquerors of yesterday to close their eyes and see nothing, they would have to have a will to suicide. Hindenburg for once spoke the truth when he wrote:

> It is useless to speak of the possibility for Germany to undertake a new war... Remember what a task it was for America to raise and equip an army of a million men... and yet they had the protection of the Ocean, while they prepared their artillery, their munitions and their aviation material.

Digitized by Google

Germany for her aviation, her heavy artillery, her armament, is not separated by the Ocean from her enemies; on the contrary these are already firmly established in German territory. Months would be necessary to prepare a new war, and do you think that the French would look on with their hands in their pockets?...

A modern mobilization demands years of preparation—and cannot be carried out in secret. Neither of these essentials is henceforth in the hands of Germany and if the military clauses of the Treaty do not suppress a danger which will exist as long as there will be at our gates sixty million men who are proud to be called Germans, these clauses raise against this danger the greatest obstacles that reason can conceive and accumulate guarantees the like of which history has never recorded. If these clauses are enforced; if the suppression of obligatory military service is rigorously maintained; if the aeroplanes, tanks, heavy artillery disappear; if there remain but 100,000 men with 288 field guns, manufactured in factories chosen by the Allies; if the left bank of the Rhine and the zone of 50 kilometers to the east of the river remain strictly closed to all German preparations; if the German mobilization instead of taking place on the left bank of the Rhine, must be carried out between the Elbe and the Weser; if finally the national Intelligence Services on whose findings the League of Nations will pass and take action, are vigilant, Germany will be—for so long as all this is done with care—incapable of preparing and of carrying into effect that fundamental act of war which is called the Mobilization. Enforced as they should be, the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles make this certain.

To have demanded less would have been an insult to our dead and a betrayal of our living.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

THE LEFT BANK OF THE RHINE

This was one of the main issues of the Peace Conference. It brought out more clearly, more seriously than any other, the difference in national psychology, the difficulty that governments and peoples have in understanding one another, albeit they are loyal Allies, united by victory and by sacrifice. The occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and of the bridgeheads was for us French both an indispensable guarantee for the enforcement of the peace, and a necessary assurance against invasion such as had occurred twice in fifty years. To others, associated though they were heart and soul in our perils of the past and future but interpreting history in a different light, this occupation, no matter what its form or duration, seemed unjustifiable, useless and dangerous.

As early as November, 1918, Marshal Foch on purely military grounds had addressed a Note to M. Clemenceau, laying stress on the necessity of making the Rhine the Western frontier of Germany. On January 10 following, in a second Note which he handed to the Commanders-in-Chief of the Allied Armies, Marshal Foch had developed his arguments and summed them up in the following conclusion:

> Marshal von Moltke placed the military frontier of Germany at the Rhine and at the end of one of his papers writes: "There can be no doubt about the ordinary strength of our theatre of operations on the Rhine. One thing only could endanger it—a premature offensive by us on the left bank with insufficient forces." And elsewhere he states: "The main line of defense of Prussia

Digitized by Google

against France is the Rhine with its fortresses. This line is so strong that it is far from requiring all the forces of the monarchy."

To-day this situation is reversed in favour of the coalition. The coalition cannot renounce its advantages, cannot relinquish its buckler of defense in that region—the Rhine—without seriously compromising its future. The "Wacht am Rhein" must be its slogan.

Henceforth the Rhine must be the Western frontier of the German peoples. Germany must be deprived of all access to or military utilization of it, that is to say, of all territorial sovereignty on the left bank of this River—in a word, of every facility to reach by sudden invasion, as in 1914, of Belgium and Luxemburg, the shores of the North Sea and threaten England; to move around France's natural defenses, the Rhine and the Meuse; to conquer her northern regions and approach that of Paris.

This is, for the present and the near future, a guarantee indispensable for the maintenance of peace, because:

1. Of Germany's material and moral situation.

2. Of her numerical superiority over the democratic countries of Western Europe.

The Rhine, a military frontier indispensable for the maintenance of peace, which is the aim of the coalition, offers no territorial advantage to any country. There is no question indeed of annexing the left bank of the Rhine, of increasing the territory of France or of Belgium but simply one of maintaining on the Rhine the common barrier of security essential to the society of democratic nations. There is no question of entrusting the guardianship of this common barrier to any one Power, but of assuring by the moral and material support of all the democratic powers the defense of their lives and futures by forbidding Germany, once for all, to carry war and her spirit of domination across the river.

Of course it will be the function of the Peace Treaty to fix the status of the inhabitants of the left bank of the Rhine not included within the French and Belgian frontiers.

But this arrangement, whatever it be, must take into consideration the military necessity set forth above and therefore,

1. Absolutely forbid to Germany all military access to, or political propaganda in, the Rhenish territories of the left bank, perhaps even protecting this territory by a neutral zone on the right bank.

2. Assure the military occupation of the Rhenish territories of the left bank by Allied forces.

Digitized by Google

3. Guarantee to the Rhenish territories of the left bank the outlet necessary to their economic activities by bringing them into a customs union with the other Western States.

On these conditions, and in accordance with the universally accepted principle of the liberty of peoples, it is possible to conceive the establishment, on the left bank of the Rhine, of new autonomous States, governing themselves subject to the above reservations, an arrangement which with the aid of a strong natural frontier the Rhine will alone be capable of assuring Peace to Western Europe.

M. Clemenceau, after examining these two documents, decided to support their conclusions. He was even of the opinion that in view of objections which preliminary discussions had already foreshadowed it would be necessary to reinforce this thesis with historical and political arguments, and at the same time to dispel the anxiety and answer the adverse criticism which it seemed to have aroused. I was entrusted, therefore, with the preparation of a general Memorandum in support of our demand. This document served as a basis for the whole discussion. It seems to me indispensable to publish it in full.

February 26.

MEMORANDUM OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT On the FIXATION at the RHINE of the WESTERN FRONTIER of GERMANY and on INTER-ALLIED OCCUPATION of the RHINE BRIDGES.

I

THE OBJECTS TO BE ATTAINED

The considerations which the French Government submits to the Conference on the subject of the left bank of the Rhine have no selfish character.

They do not tend towards annexations of territories. They aim at the suppression of a common danger and the creation of a common protection.

It is a problem of general interest, a problem which France, the first exposed to the danger it is sought to avert, has the right and

Digitized by Google

duty to place before the Conference, but which directly affects all the Allied and Associated Nations and can be solved only by them conjointly.

The essential aim which the Conference seeks to attain is to prevent by all just means that which has been from ever occurring again.

Now, what happened in 1914 was possible only for one reason: Germany because of her mastery over offensive preparations made by her on the left bank of the river thought herself capable of crushing the democracies, France and Belgium, before the latter could receive the aid of the Overseas Democracies, Great Britain, the Dominions, and the United States.

It was because this was possible that Germany determined to attack.

It is therefore this possibility which must be done away with, by depriving Germany of the means which permitted her to believe in the success of her plan.

In a word there is no question of the aggrandizement of any of the Allied Nations; it is merely a question of placing Germany in a position where she can do no harm by imposing upon her conditions indispensable to the common security of the Western Democracies and of their overseas Allies and associates, as well as to the very existence of France.

There is no question of annexing an inch of German soil; only of depriving Germany of her weapons of offense.

II

THE NECESSITY OF INTER-ALLIED OCCUPATION OF THE RHINE BRIDGES

It is necessary first to examine the nature of the danger to be averted; to show whom it threatens, in what it consists; by what means it can be suppressed.

1. *The danger is common to all the Allies.*

(a) If, in 1914, the Germans, throwing back the Belgians, the French and the few British divisions then in line, had taken the Channel ports, the aid brought by Great Britain in 1915 to the common cause would have been greatly delayed if not entirely prevented.

If, in 1918, the Germans had taken Paris, the concentration of the French Armies south of the Loire and the forcing back of our war industries would certainly have delayed the landing and move-

Digitized by Google

ment by rail of the American Army, then just beginning to arrive, and this delay would have had consequences of the utmost gravity.

Thus, there is no doubt, on two occasions—and it would be easy to furnish other instances—the military assistance of the two great overseas Powers came very near being hampered, if not prevented entirely, before actually taking shape.

(b) In order that this may never be so, that is to say, in order that the maritime Powers may play a useful part on the Continent in a defensive war against an aggression coming from the East, they must have the assurance that French territory will not be overrun in a few days.

In other words, should there not remain enough French ports for the Overseas Armies to debark their troops and war supplies, should there not remain enough French territory for them to concentrate and operate from their bases, the Overseas Democracies would be debarred from waging a continental war against any Power seeking to dominate the Continent. They would be deprived of their nearest and most natural battleground. Nothing would be left to them but Naval and Economic warfare.

So, the lesson made plain by the last war is that a strong natural protection on the East is a matter of common concern to the Western and Overseas Democracies. And this lesson is emphasized by the fact that Russia to-day no longer exists.

To decide upon this protection, let us first see whence the danger comes.

2. *The danger comes from the possession by Germany of the left bank and the Rhine bridges.*

If Germany was able to plan and execute the sudden attack which nearly settled the outcome of the war in five weeks, it was because she held the left bank of the Rhine and had made of it against her neighbors an offensive military base constantly and quickly supplied, thanks to the capacity of the Rhine bridges.

All military history since 1815 demonstrates this and the plan is written out in full in the publications as well as in the acts of the German General Staff.

(a) History first, that of 1870, as of 1914.

In 1870, despite the then shortcomings of the Prussian system of railways, it was on the left bank that the concentration of the Prussian troops was carried out.

This fact is all the more significant because the Prussian General Staff was still under the impression of the reputation of the

Digitized by Google

French Army in attack and consequently, very cautious. Despite this, but on the hypothesis that France would have taken the initiative, Prussia had confined itself to the preparation of a plan of concentration farther east but always on the left bank.

In other words, she had no thought of using the river as a protection; and, in any contingency, she looked upon it as the offensive base indispensable to the execution of a plan of attack. It is known that in fact, thanks to its concentration on the left bank, the Prussian Army invaded France in less than three weeks.

In 1914, the same situation produced the same results. But things moved faster, thanks to the enormous developments of facilities. Germany, massed once more on the left bank of the Rhine (and much nearer to the French frontier than in 1870, because of the perfection of her railway system) was in a few hours able to carry the war to Belgium and to France, and in a few weeks to the very heart of France.

Before even the declaration of war Germany invaded a region from which France drew 90 per cent. of her iron ore, 86 per cent. of her pig iron, 75 per cent. of her steel, while 95 out of the 127 blast furnaces fell into the hands of the enemy.

This situation permitted Germany to multiply her war resources, while depriving France of her most necessary means of defense. It nearly resulted in the taking of Paris in 1914, of Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne six weeks later.

All this was possible only because, at our very gates, at a few days' march from our capital, Germany had the most formidable offensive military base known to history.

(b) This military base she has had for a century and in pursuit of a policy of aggression which has never varied—and which had as its objective the bridgeheads of the Sarre in 1815, of the Rhine and of the Moselle in 1870, and of the Meuse in 1914—has constantly reinforced it, openly asserting that the left bank of the Rhine was indispensable to her for that purpose.

During the negotiations at the Conference of Vienna, Gneisenau and Grolman already indicated that the "main concentration of the Prussian Army must take place between the Rhine and the Moselle."

Won over by their insistence, Castlereagh wrote to Wellington on October 1, 1815: "Mr. Pitt was altogether right when, as early as 1805, he wanted to give Prussia more territory on the left bank

Digitized by Google

of the Rhine, and thus put her in closer military contact with France."

In 1832, Boyen repeated that the point of concentration must be Treves.

In 1840, Grolman, reiterating the same idea, declared the first objective of German concentration to be an offensive in Lorraine and in Champagne.

The same idea prompted Moltke's plan of operations against France in 1870. It is this same plan that Germany carried out in 1914 on an unprecedented scale and with unprecedented violence.

Finally, need we recall that in November, 1917, Admiral von Tirpitz declared in an address to the German Fatherland League, that "without the possession of the left bank, Germany would have been unable to pass her Armies through a neutral Belgium!"

(c) Such being the doctrine Germany translated into action by organizing for military purposes the left bank of the Rhine and the bridges which are the key to that organization.

With this in view she built fortresses, concentration camps, finally and above all, a railway system powerfully equipped for attack and linked by the Rhine bridges with the whole railway system on the right bank, which also was laid out for the same purposes of attack. The fortifications of the Rhine and of its left bank comprised in addition to the fortified districts of Metz-Thionville and Strassburg-Molsheim (whose rôle will disappear with the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France) the Rhine fortresses—Cologne, Coblenz and Mayence—crossing points for the strategic railways, and vast entrenched camps (supplies, equipment, barracks, and factories and workshops, etc.).

The training camps, like that of Malmedy, were suitable for transformation into concentration camps—an easy way of concentrating troops under pretense of training in the neighborhood of a peaceful or even neutral state (France, Belgium, Luxemburg).

The railway system is of still wider significance. A glance at the map of German railways on the right bank of the Rhine, will show that nine great independent transportation highways converge towards the bridges and continue across them to the left bank.

Eight of these nine highways run between Duisburg and Rastatt, flooding the French frontier with troops and preparing the way for aggression.

It is, therefore, obvious that the plan of aggression, conceived

Digitized by Google

and prepared as early as 1815, and twice executed—in 1870 and 1914—was based *upon the transportation capacity of the Rhine bridges.* Without the left bank, and above all, without the bridges —the second feeding the first—aggression would not have been possible.

(d) And this is so true, that, as early as 1909, General von Falkenhausen, in his book *Der Grosse Krieg der Jetztzeit,* showed that by her mastery of the bridges, Germany could wage war in enemy territory even supposing that the French, British and Italian Armies had utilized before the opening of hostilities the territories of Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Rhine, and had carried out their concentration in front of the Schlestadt-Sarreburg-Saint-Avold-Luxemburg-Bastogne line.

Even in such a contingency, according to the General, if Germany concentrated on the Rhine and controlled the bridges, the transportation capacity of these bridges would enable her, in three days to transport half of her forces—more than twenty Army Corps—to the line Juliers-Duren-Kochem-Birkenfeld-Kaiserlautern-Haguenau, without her adversaries having time to prevent it.

It will be seen that the hypothetical conditions stated by General von Falkenhausen correspond exactly to the situation which would arise if peace were to leave Germany in possession of the Rhine bridges. This possession of these bridges, according to the General's own demonstration, would suffice, no matter what happened, to assure to Germany the advantages of an offensive war.

This hypothesis proves, in other words, that the danger arises from the possession by Germany not only of the left bank but also and, above all, of the Rhine bridges.

Thus, geography, history and the doctrine of the German General Staff all go to prove that the aggressive power of Germany depends upon the strategic railway system she has built on the left bank of the Rhine, taken in combination with the river fortresses, that is to say, in the last analysis, that *her power of aggression is measured by the transportation capacity of the Rhine bridges.*

If that power of aggression is to be abolished, it is essential to take from Germany not only the left bank, but the Rhine bridges, which amounts to the fixation of her Western frontier at the Rhine.

That is an absolutely essential condition. Is it a sufficient safeguard?

(3) *The safety of the Western and Overseas Democracies*

Digitized by Google

makes it imperative, in present circumstances, for them to guard the bridges of the Rhine.

Would the non-occupation by Germany of the left bank and the bridges suffice to prevent the renewal of her sudden attacks of 1870 and 1914? Certainly not.

(a) If indeed the bridges are not guarded against Germany, she can easily seize them by reason of her railway system on the right bank. The railway map shows this.

Can it be said that in this case it be enough to destroy the system of strategic railways on the left bank? It would either be impossible or useless.

Impossible, because a total destruction cannot be conceived; for the railways respond to economic as well as to strategic demands.

Useless, because a partial destruction, involving only the military equipment, would be ineffective, for the military and the commercial stations are often the same.

It would always, therefore, be possible for Germany either to build new stations on commercial pretexts or to supplement those already existing with debarcation sidings along the tracks.

(b) On the other hand, even dismantled, the Rhine towns, with their bridges, railway stations, commercial equipment could always constitute splendid points for the detraining and concentration of troops.

In other words, the only positive guarantee against a German aggression is inter-allied occupation of the bridges, for, if once this occupation is effected and Germany were again to plan an aggression, it would first be necessary for her to modify her railway system on the right bank. This would quickly become known.

Therefore, the occupation of the bridges is the minimum protection essential to the Western and Overseas Democracies.

(c) It is also an indispensable protection for the new States which the Allies have called into being to the east and south of Germany.

Let us suppose that Germany, controlling the Rhine, should decide to attack the Republic of Poland, or the Republic of Bohemia.

Established defensively on the Rhine, she would hold in check for how long nobody knows the Western nations coming to the rescue of the young Republics, and the latter would be crushed before they could receive aid.

Digitized by Google

(4) *Conclusion.*

To sum up:

(a) The common safety of the Western and Overseas Democracies makes it essential that Germany should be unable to renew her sudden attack of 1870 and 1914.

(b) To prevent Germany from renewing that attack, it is essential to forbid her access to the left bank of the Rhine, and to fix her western border at the river.

(c) To forbid her this access, it is essential that the bridges be occupied.

This is the one and only way:

(a) To deprive Germany of her offensive base.

(b) To provide the Western Democracies with a proper and reliable defense; first, by the width of the Rhine (preventing any sudden attack by means of gases, tanks, etc....); second, by its straight course (preventing any flanking movement).

The history of a whole century shows the necessity of this defense! The common safety of the Allies demands that the Rhine should become, in President Wilson's words "the frontier of freedom."

III

INADEQUACY OF PRESENT GUARANTEES FURNISHED BY THE LIMITATIONS OF THE MILITARY FORCES OF GERMANY OR BY THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Everybody, we believe, will be agreed on the object to be attained. But it may be asked whether there is only one way to attain it.

In other words, is the guarantee—Germany and her military forces thrust back across the Rhine and the Rhine bridges occupied by the Allies—which the French Government deems absolutely indispensable, the only one which can possibly attain the object sought?

Would not sufficient protection be afforded, on the contrary, either by limitation of Germany's military forces or by the terms of the first draft of the League of Nations?

To this question, the French Government for the following reasons makes a negative reply.

(1) *The limitation of the military forces of Germany is not at present an adequate guarantee.*

Digitized by Google

(a) Germany's military strength rests upon three basic factors.

Man Power (seventy million inhabitants, furnishing 650,000 men a year); war supplies (existing stocks and potential production); General Staff (which constitutes a veritable State within the State).

Measures for limiting Germany's military forces are under consideration. They must rest upon the three foregoing factors, and more especially restrict:

—the number and composition of divisions, the annual contingent, etc.

—the equipment and supplies.

—the old military organization (war college, manœuvres, etc.).

Suppose Germany accepts these restrictions. Will this be a complete safeguard? No.

(b) First history—though not wishing to lay undue stress upon its lessons—teaches the value of skepticism.

Just one instance; in September, 1808, Napoleon imposed upon Prussia the undertaking that for ten years she would not keep an Army of more than 42,000 men or resort to any extraordinary levy of militia or national guards or to any other device which might give her a military force exceeding this total of 42,000 men. But what actually happened?

In spite of Napoleon's unceasing diplomatic and military supervision, Prussia managed to elude or nullify all the clauses. Knowing that with a population of five millions, she could maintain an Army of 150,000 men, she passed all her male population fit for service through the Army in the shortest time possible, by reducing the term of active service, and she also organized preliminary military instruction in her schools.

Despite her conqueror's threats and his power to bring pressure to bear upon Prussia, this military reorganization proceeded uninterruptedly and resulted in the creation of the great National Army of several hundred thousand men which was mobilized in 1813.

(c) So much for the past. Will it be said that we shall have in the future more effective means of supervision than Napoleon had? Perhaps. But we answer that the difficulties attending this supervision will increase far more than the efficacy of our means of supervision.

Instead of a small country of five million inhabitants, we shall have to deal with a country of seventy millions.

Digitized by Google

Instead of a country without industries, we shall have to deal with a country possessing huge industrial resources.

For our supervision to be real, it should extend over:

—the war budget

—the industrial budget

—the organization of the General Staff and of the Army

—the size of the Army and the recruiting laws

—the supplies of war material

—the manufacturing capacity of the whole German territory

—the moral influences including schools and education.

Does anyone believe that this supervision can be established in a day? Does anyone believe that we shall know, for many years to come, whether or not it is effective? Assuredly not.

Can it fail to be recognized, on the other hand, that during the next few years Germany will retain through force of circumstances a military force, certain elements of which cannot be reduced—viz.:

—highly trained staffs

—an enormous corps of trained officers (110,500 in August, 1918, excluding the Bavarian Army)

—millions of soldiers broken to war

—a man power of military age which will grow for many years in direct ratio to the steady increase in the German birth rate.

—war supplies and manufacturing potentialities, part of which Germany can conceal, since we, ourselves,—the Allies—have not yet been able to make an accurate estimate of our own existing war material.

And can one on the other hand rely upon Germany for an honest fulfillment of her undertaking, when the so-called German Democracy shows in every direction a total lack of morality and has placed at its head men who were the most active agents of militarism and imperialism: Ebert, Scheidemann, David, Erzberger and Brockdorff-Rantzau, not to mention Hindenburg?

Besides as regards their intentions, we have their own statements. The Ebert Government has declared its intention of adopting the Swiss military system. Translated into figures, what does this mean?

It means that Germany could on the basis of Swiss military law mobilize 193 divisions with the corresponding army troops—the exact force which she hurled against the Western front in her spring offensive of 1918.

Again in the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* of January 25,

Digitized by Google

1919, was published a statement by the Bavarian war minister, estimating at 7,700,000 men the war strength of the future German Army, 3,200,000 of them being fighting troops.

(d) From all this we may draw a conclusion, which all will admit to be just and conservative, that, at least for the present and for years to come, no limitation of Germany's forces is possible, no supervision of this limitation can assure complete safety, either to the victims of the German aggression in 1914, or to the new states now in process of formation.

On the seas the total surrender of the German Navy has, to a large extent, afforded such a safeguard. *On land nothing of the kind is possible.*

The result is that whatever improvement the future may bring to the general world situation, the limitation of Germany's military power can at present only hold out troops to the Western Democracies, but in no wise constitute a certain safeguard!

But hopes—without certainty—cannot suffice to those who suffered the aggression of 1914.

Hopes—without certainty—cannot suffice Belgium, victim of her loyalty to her pledged word, punished for her loyalty by invasion, fire, pillage, rape and ruin.

Hopes—without certainty—cannot suffice France, invaded before any declaration of war, deprived in a few hours (because she had drawn her troops back from the border to avoid incidents) of 90 per cent. of her iron ore and 86 per cent. of her pig iron. Hopes—without certainty—cannot suffice France whose losses were 1,364,000 killed, 790,000 crippled and 3,000,000 wounded, not to mention 438,000 prisoners who suffered physical martyrdom in German prison camps. Hopes—without certainty—cannot suffice France who lost 16 per cent. of her mobilized man power and 57 per cent. of her soldiers under 31 years of age—the most productive part of the nation. Hopes—without certainty—cannot suffice France who saw a fourth of her productive capital blotted out by the systematic destruction of her industrial districts in the North and in the East, who saw taken into captivity—and what captivity—her children, her women and her girls.

To these two countries—Belgium and France—certain safeguards are essential—not only the certainty of never again being exposed to what they suffered five years ago, but also the certainty that, failing physical guarantees, they will not have to bear overwhelming military burdens. But these certain safeguards cannot

Digitized by Google

be furnished France and Belgium by the limitation of German military power.

(2) *Nor can the League of Nations, at present, provide an adequate guarantee.*

Can this complete security, which is indispensable and which cannot now be given either by limiting German military power, or by supervising this limitation, be found in the Covenant of the League of Nations, as now submitted to the Conference?

(a) Eight articles of the draft Covenant (Articles X to XVIII) define the guarantees against aggression assured to the members of the League. These guarantees may be said to consist in a double interval of time, viz.:

(1) The longest possible time between the threat of war and the act of war (to increase the chances of reaching agreement).

(2) The shortest possible time between the act of war and the concerted action of the League members in aid of the country attacked.

Under such conditions, we believe that this guarantee is inadequate to prevent the recurrence of what took place in 1914, *i. e.* a sudden attack by Germany against France and Belgium and the immediate invasion of their territory.

The reasons for our belief are numerous, principally the following:

(b) First: the measures which determine the interval of time between the threat of aggression and the act of aggression (ordinary diplomatic methods, arbitration, inquiry by the Executive Committee, undertakings of the parties not to resort to force before arbitration and inquiry, and only three months after a judicial decision has been rendered) are applicable only if the dispute arises between nations having subscribed to the Covenant of the League.

Now Germany is not and cannot be a member of the League.

The Covenant provides, it is true, a complete procedure applicable to States not members. But there is no guarantee whatever that this procedure would be accepted by Germany, should she again plan a sudden attack.

On the contrary, we have every reason to believe that she would act with the utmost speed.

In such an hypothesis, it is clear that the Germany of to-day—the Germany that is evading the question of responsibilities,—the Germany of Scheidemann, Erzberger, Brockdorff-Rantzau—will be halted in her plans for aggression, neither by an invitation to join

Digitized by Google

the League, nor by the threat of a financial and commercial blockade. It is clear that Germany—knowing the penalty she would have to pay if she gave international forces time to come into play—will fall upon France and Belgium with the idea, even more firmly implanted than in 1870 or 1914, that time is for her the essential factor of success.

We believe therefore that the provisions of the Covenant which enjoin legal steps between the threat of war and the act of war will not suffice to stop Germany, should she decide to attack. That is our first reason.

(c) Second. Germany's method is sudden attack. What immediate guarantee does the Covenant furnish? Remember that proposals made by the French delegation with a view to the creation of a permanent international force have been rejected.

If one of the members is attacked, what happens? The Executive Committee of the League takes action and specifies the strength of the military or naval contingents to be furnished by every member of the League.

Suppose that the Committee takes this action with the utmost speed. Only one thing is lacking, the decisions of the Committee are not of themselves executory.

Take, in order to make this clear, the case of America, for instance. What happens?

The naval and military forces of the United States cannot be used without the assent of the Congress. Suppose Congress is not in session. Between a German aggression and the moment when American aid could become effective, the following steps would have to be taken:

—a decision by the Executive Committee of the League.

—a meeting of Congress, with the necessary quorum, which might take four or five days.

—a message from the President of the United States.

—a discussion of the matter before Congress.

—the mobilization of an American Expeditionary Force and its transportation to Europe.

We have cited the case of America but it is not the only one.

Consider anew the necessary steps outlined above and apply them to the German attack of 1914.

Suppose that invaded France and invaded Belgium had had to set this complicated machinery in motion before obtaining British aid and that Great Britain, instead of beginning to ship troops within a week, had been obliged (after a meeting of and action by

Digitized by Google

the Executive Committee of the League of Nations, communication of its decision, discussion of the case by the British Government, meeting of Parliament, debate, etc.) to delay her actual intervention till all these various things had been done, the left of the French Army would have been turned at Charleroi, and the war lost on August 24, 1914.

In other words, suppose that instead of the defensive military understanding—very limited indeed—which was given effect to between Great Britain and France in 1914 there had been no other bond between the two countries than the general agreements contained in the Covenant of the League, the British intervention would have been less prompt and Germany's victory thereby assured.

So we believe that, under present conditions, the aid provided for by the Covenant of the League would arrive too late. That is our second reason.

(d) Our third reason, and it is final, is that because of the geographical position of France we have two aims equally imperative:

—the one is Victory

—the other the protection of our soil.

It may be accepted as certain that, thanks to the principle of solidarity embodied in the Covenant of the League, final victory would rest with us in the case of a new German aggression.

But this is not enough. We are determined that invasion, the systematic destruction of our soil and the suffering of our fellow citizens in the North and East, shall not again be endured from the time of the aggression to that of final victory.

It is against this second danger, quite as much as against the danger of defeat, that a certain safeguard is necessary. This guarantee the League does not provide, but it is provided by the proposals put forward by the French Government.

(e) Summing up here our argument touching the guarantee provided by the League, our contention is that:

On the one hand, Germany will remain outside of the League of Nations for an indefinite length of time.

On the other hand, the decisions of the Executive Committee, instead of automatically setting in motion an international force ready for action, will have to be submitted to the approval of the various Parliaments, which will decide whether or not their national forces may join the military forces of the nation attacked.

Digitized by Google

So we obtain neither of the two guarantees on which the peace-enforcing action of the League is supposedly based, namely:

—a very long interval between the idea of war and the act of war.

—a very brief interval between the act of war and the joining together of all the military forces of the League members.

In default of these two guarantees, we ask against a Germany whose population is twice that of France, and whose word cannot be trusted for a long time to come, another kind of guarantee: *a physical guarantee.*

This physical guarantee in our mind is not intended to take the place of the other, provided by the League, but to give the latter time to operate before it is too late.

This physical guarantee—We have shown that *there is such guarantee, and only one such*: the guard of the Rhine bridges by an inter-allied force.

Let us add that, for the time being, it is to the interest of the League of Nations itself that this supplementary guarantee should insure the normal and effective working of the dual machinery conceived by the League for the maintenance of peace.

IV

SUPPRESSION BY INTER-ALLIED OCCUPATION OF THE RHINE BRIDGES OF SEVERAL CAUSES OF WAR

We have established:

(1) That a common guarantee against the recurrence of any sudden attack from Germany is necessary.

(2) That this guarantee cannot be completely assured either by the limitation or the suppression of Germany's military power, or by the proposed clauses of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

(3) That this guarantee can be found only in the fixation at the Rhine of the Western frontier of Germany, and in the occupation of the bridges by an inter-allied force.

It is easy to show, moreover, that the common guarantee assured by the occupation of the Rhine bridges accords with the common interests of the League and with its pacific ideals; it does away with a certain number of permanent causes of war which it is at once the interest and the duty of the League to eliminate.

(1) *Elimination of a dangerous disproportion in strength.*

Digitized by Google

Germany (even without Poznan, Schleswig, Alsace-Lorraine and the Rhine provinces on the left bank) still has more than fifty-nine million inhabitants, to which would probably be added in case of war seven million German-Austrians, making a total of sixty-six million men. France, Belgium and Luxemburg, on the other hand, have not more than forty-nine million.

Russia no longer exists as a counter-weight and the States recently created do not yet count. This was strongly emphasized by Mr. Winston Churchill, at a meeting of the Supreme Council of the Allies on February 15, 1919: "There are twice as many Germans as French and by reason of the high German birth rate, Germany has annually three times as many young men of military age as France. That is a tremendous fact." This "tremendous fact" is a war factor. If it cannot be eliminated, it is at least useful to try to reduce it.

(2) *Elimination of one of the economic causes of German aggressions.*

It is generally admitted that it is essential that industrial zones vital to each nation should be protected.

For rapid occupation of these vital zones gives a decisive advantage to the aggressor, who thus adds to his own means of production those which he wrests from his adversary. It is thus certain that the possibility of securing such an advantage is a cause of war.

History demonstrates this. In 1815, Germany aimed at the coal of the Sarre; in 1870 at the ores of Lorraine; in 1914 at the ores of Briey.

Germany herself has explicitly admitted that, if she was able to carry on the last war it was because she was able by sudden attack to seize the French ores "without which she could never by any possibility have waged this war successfully." (Memorandum of the German iron and steel manufacturers, December, 1917).

If the Rhine had separated the two Powers, no such action would have been possible. And it is strengthening the peace to remove from Germany—in separating her from her historical objective—one of the main motives of her past aggressions.

(3) *Protection for the smaller states whose safety the League of Nations seeks to secure.*

First to Belgium by removing from her a dangerous neighbor. Admiral von Tirpitz, quoted above, made this statement to the German Fatherland League (*Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, November 11, 1917):

Digitized by Google

"Realize clearly what would happen if our existing front—now resting on the sea,—should be on the eastern border of the Rhine country, we could never again succeed in throwing our armies through a neutral Belgium."

Then to Poland, to Czecho-Slovakia, to Jugo Slavia which, should Germany take advantage of their initial difficulties and seek to throttle them, must not see the Rhine, held by Germany, cut off the aid awaited by them from the Western Democracies.

(4) *Closing the great historic road of invasion.*

The left bank of the Rhine has been for centuries the road of invasions. Its natural situation on the one hand, the direction of its railway lines on the other, have made of it one of the battle grounds of history, where the peoples of the right bank (whenever they also controlled the left bank) found potentialities of aggression which the interests of peace demand should be done away with.

(5) *Creation of a natural frontier equal for all.*

The Rhine, both on account of its width and of the straightness of its course, offers to the peoples of both banks the same natural guarantee against aggression.

(6) *Conclusion.*

From the foregoing it is permissible to conclude that the common guarantee created by the fixation at the Rhine of the Western frontier of Germany and by the occupation of the Rhine bridges by an inter-allied force, is not only necessary but in complete accord with the principles advocated by the League of Nations for the prevention of future wars.

V

FRENCH INTERESTS IDENTICAL WITH GENERAL INTERESTS

It is now possible to obtain a bird's-eye view of the problem which can be summed up as follows:

(a) In this matter, France claims nothing for herself, neither an inch of territory, nor any right of sovereignty. She does not want to annex the left bank of the Rhine.

What she proposes is the creation in the interest of all of a common protection for all the peaceful democracies, of the League of Nations, of the cause of Liberty and of Peace.

But it is France's duty to add that her bequest, which accords with the general welfare and is free from any selfish design, is of

Digitized by Google

vital necessity to herself and that on its principle she cannot compromise. France sees in it in fact the only immediate and complete guarantee that what she suffered in 1870 and 1914 will not occur again and she owes it to her people, to the dead who must not have died in vain, to the living who wish to rebuild their country in peace and not to stagger beneath overpowering military burdens to obtain this guarantee.

As to the manner of applying this guarantee, the French Government is ready to consult with its Allies with a view to establishing under the most favourable conditions the national, political and economical system of the regions, access to which it demands shall be forbidden to Germany. To this end, the French Government will accept any suggestions which are not inconsistent with the principle stated.

This principle may be summed up in three paragraphs.

1. No German military force on the left bank of the Rhine, and fixation at the Rhine of the Western frontier of Germany.

2. Occupation of the Rhine bridges by an inter-allied force.

3. No annexation.

This is what under present circumstances France asks as a necessary guarantee of international peace, as the indispensable safeguard of her national existence.

She hopes that all her Allies and Associates will appreciate the *General Interests* of this proposal.

She counts, on the other hand, that they will acknowledge her right and her duty to present and to support this demand for her own sake.

(b) Also this is not the only time that the vital interests of a nation have accorded with the general interests of mankind.

At all times the great naval Powers have asserted—whether the issue were Philip II or Napoleon or William II—that their strength was the only force capable of offsetting imperialistic attempts to control the continent.

It is on this ground that they have justified the maintenance, for their own advantages, of powerful fleets.

Yet, at the same time, they have never concealed the fact that these fleets were a vital necessity to themselves as well.

Of vital necessity to the British Isles and the British Empire—which have made known their refusal to give up any part of that naval power which enabled them to hold the seas against Germany.

Of a vital necessity to the United States, washed by two oceans, requiring safeguards for the export of its natural and industrial

Digitized by Google

resources, and which despite its peaceful policy has for the above reason created a Navy that is even now being further expanded.

For Great Britain, in fact, as well as for the United States, the Navy is a means of pushing away from beyond their coasts the frontier which they would have to defend in case of aggression, and of creating a safety-zone in front of this frontier, in front of their national soil.

For France, the question is the same with this triple difference: that, first, she is not protected from Germany by the seas; that, second, she cannot possibly secure on land the complete guarantee which Great Britain and the United States secured on the sea by the surrender of the German fleet to the Allies, and that finally, the "one to two" ratio between her population and Germany's precludes the hope that in case of war she may ever enjoy the advantage which the naval Powers have always derived from the "two power standards."

For France, as for Great Britain and the United States, it is necessary to create a zone of safety.

This zone the naval Powers create by their fleets, and by the elimination of the German fleet. This zone France, unprotected by the ocean, unable to eliminate the millions of German trained to war, must create by the Rhine, by an inter-allied occupation of that river.

If she did not do so, she would once more be exposed, if not to final defeat, at least to a partial destruction of her soil by an enemy invasion.

It is a danger which she never intends to run again.

Moreover, as explained above, the guarantee of peace created by the existence of the naval Powers, could not be of full effect unless the occupation of the Rhine provided a similar guarantee for the Western Democracies.

At a recent meeting of the Supreme Council of the Allies, February 11, 1919, Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. House showed one after the other what the future has to fear from a Russo-German rapprochement.

In such an event it is not with their fleets that the naval Powers, capable only of establishing a blockade, could defend the continent against an imperialistic aggression.

The naval Powers would still need the possibility of landing on the continent and of fighting there. For that the inter-allied guard of the Rhine is indispensable.

Digitized by Google

But there is more and one may ask whether, in such case, even the blockade established by the fleets would be effective. Of what use would it be against Germany, mistress of Russia, colonizing and exploiting Russia, if Germany were to strike a successful and decisive blow against France and Belgium, occupying their ports and dominating all the neutral powers of Europe?

This fear was expressed by Mr. House at the meeting of February 15, when he pointed out the danger of an union "of the whole world east of the Rhine." To prevent such an union, or at least to avert its consequences, there is only one way: that the Rhine, henceforth, instead of serving as in the past Germany against the Allies, should protect the Allies against the undertakings of Germany.

In commending this viewpoint to the attention of our Allies and Associates, and more especially of the two great naval Powers, the British Empire and the United States, the French Government is deeply conscious that it is working for peace, just as the naval Powers are conscious that they serve the cause of peace by maintaining or increasing their naval forces.

And just as the naval Powers, in maintaining or increasing their fleets, have no design whatsoever to conquer the seas, so the demand of France as to the guard of the Rhine involves neither gain nor sovereignty nor annexation of territory.

France does not demand for herself the left bank of the Rhine: she would not know what to do with it, and her interest equally with her ideals forbids any such claim.

France demands one thing only. It is that the necessary and only possible and certain measures to prevent the left bank of the Rhine from again becoming a base for German aggression, shall be taken by the Powers now gathered at the Peace Conference.

In other words, with no territorial ambitions, *but deeply imbued with the necessity of creating a protection both national and international,* France looks to an inter-allied occupation of the Rhine for the same results that Great Britain and the United States expect from the maintenance of their naval forces; either more, or less.

In both cases, a national necessity coincides with an international safeguard.

In both cases, even if the second be interpreted in different ways, the first will remain for the country concerned *an obligation subject neither to restriction nor reserve.*

Such is the principle that the French Government begs the

Digitized by Google

Allied and Associated Governments to confirm and sanction by adopting the following decision to be inserted in the provisions of the preliminaries of Peace:

1. *The Western frontier of Germany must be fixed at the Rhine.*

2. *The bridges of the Rhine must be occupied by an inter-allied force.*

3. *The above measures to imply no annexation of territory to the benefit of any Power.*

To this document setting forth the principle of our demand I had attached two appendices. One was the outline of a political system applicable to an independent Rhineland, the other a study of the economic results of its independence, both on the left bank of the Rhine and in Germany itself.

The first of these Notes recalled that during the greater part of their history the Rhine provinces of the left bank, with their five and a half million inhabitants, had been independent of both Prussia and Germany. Since 1815 they had lived, under Prussian as well as under Bavarian rule, as "crown property"—a legal title abolished by the fall of the Hohenzollerns and the Wittelsbachs. Originally peopled by Celts and Latinized by Rome, they had in the course of centuries been affected quite as strongly by French as by German influences. In 1793, they had greeted the French as liberators and gratefully accepted the wise administration of Napoleon. Since that time, again attached to Germany, they had persisted in their hatred of Prussia and their inhabitants called themselves "must be Prussians" (*Muspreussen*). At present, all the concordant reports submitted by us to our Allies tended to show this rich region in terror of the separatist danger, wanting the maintenance of order above all else, distrustful of the Prussian officials and, though German in tongue and tradition, probably capable of developing politically along liberal lines, if it could thereby serve its own interest. The peace of Europe demanded, in our view, that the left bank of the Rhine should become independent. There was no reason

Digitized by Google

we thought why the left bank itself should not appreciate the advantages of this independence. Our Note enumerated in support of this contention various measures: suppression of military service; relief from war taxes; facilities of food supplies and export; customs union; banking reforms; independent government under the protection of the League of Nations—all of which seemed likely to help the conditions imperative for common safety.

Our last Note, exhaustive and very detailed, analyzed, one by one, the conditions which would prevail both in Germany and in a free Rhine State, after the latter had been set up. This study dealt in turn with the territories, the inhabitants, the large cities, the railroads, river navigation, wine, wheat, rye, barley, oats, hay, potatoes, sugar, coal mines, lignite, iron ore, cast iron, steel, zinc, lead, copper and textiles. It was summarized in a table (see opposite page) and concluded as follows:

1. The loss of the left bank of the Rhine, added to that of Alsace-Lorraine, deprives Germany of eight per cent. of her territory and represents a loss of:

11% of her population
15% approximately of her railroad and river traffic
67% of her wine industry
12% of her coal mines
80% of her iron ore
33% at least of her metallurgy
30% of her textiles

Of the important articles, only cereals, sugar and potatoes would be slightly diminished by from four per cent. to nine per cent.

2. The left bank of the Rhine, separated from Germany, would easily find the products she needs (cereals, iron ore, mineral and chemical products).

Her fuel exports would provide an adequate outlet in France.

Her mental and textile products would, as before, be obliged to find a market outside of Germany.

Her chemical products (dyestuffs, etc.) would, like those of the right bank, have to face the budding competition of the countries

Digitized by Google

	Germany in 1914	Alsace-Lorraine	Left Bank Rhine	Luxemburg	Contrasted position of Germany with that of 1914 reckoned in percentage	
Area	540,800 km	14,500 km	28,000 km	.....	92%	
Population (1913)	64,925,000	1,874,000	5,500,000	.....	89%	
Density of population	120 per km	129 per km	196 per km	.....	115 per km	
Number of towns with more than 100,000 inhabitants	52	2	5	.....	45	
Railroads, Extent of lines	61,000 km	1,800 km	4,300 km	.....	90%	
Traffic (without transit)	938,600,000 T	45,200,000 T	94,000,000 T	.....	86%	
Shipping (without transit)	156,300,000 T	19,500,000 T	4,800,000 T	.....	85%	
Wine	921,000 H	144,000 H	480,000 H	.....	33%	
Wheat	3,927,000 T	182,000 T	199,000 T	.....	91%	
Rye	10,426,000 T	77,000 T	516,000 T	.....	95%	
Barley	3,138,000 T	88,000 T	137,000 T	.....	93%	
Oats	9,038,000 T	191,000 T	597,000 T	.....	92%	
Hay	29,156,000 T	1,156,000 T	556,000 T	.....	95%	
Potatoes	45,570,000 T	873,000 T	2,758,000 T	.....	92%	
Sugar (beet)	16,940,000 T	.....	730,000 T	.....	96%	Including Upper Silesia 65%
Coal	190,109,000 T	3,846,000 T	20,201,000 T	.....	88%	
Lignite	87,233,000 T	.....	20,256,000 T	.....	77%	
Iron ore (Includ. Luxemburg)	35,000,000 T	21,000,000 T	.....	7,000,000	20%	Provided there is ore
Cast iron (Includ. Luxemburg)	19,309,000 T	3,870,000 T	2,670,000 T	2,548,000	53%	
Steel (Includ. Luxemburg)	19,030,000 T	2,290,000 T	3,230,000 T	1,340,000	64%	
Zinc	643,000 T	.....	102,000 T	.....	85%	
Lead	142,800 T	.....	46,000 T	.....	68%	
Copper	969,300 T	.....	47,000 T	.....	95%	
Weaving Industries	400,000 T	56,000 T	63,000 T	.....	70%	

Digitized by Google

of the Entente. Her wines, however, heretofore consumed in Germany, would probably have difficulty in finding buyers elsewhere, and it might be necessary to force Germany to levy only specified duties.

A customs union between France, Belgium and the Rhine country would offer advantages in regard to a large number of products and at least would offer no disadvantages.

It would, however, present four problems: one, easily solved, regarding metal products; and three others, more delicate, regarding wines, textiles and coloring matters.

The independence of the Rhineland, only effective guarantee that this region would act as barrier and buffer between Germany and the Western Democracies—for its autonomy as part of the German Reich would merely place it in the same position as Bavaria, whose theoretical "liberty" did not prevent it, in 1870 or 1914, from joining the attack against France—the independence of the Rhineland and its occupation by Allied forces—essential as a military safeguard—appeared to us to be a political and economic possibility. It was a solution of Liberty, not of Imperialism. A certain safeguard against a Germany ever more populous than France; a guarantee of the peaceful enforcement of the Treaty which was to found a new order of things in Europe—thus it was that France presented the problem from the beginning. And if only a part of France's proposals prevailed, still it was as a safeguard and as a guarantee that the Treaty of Versailles imposed upon Germany the occupation by the Allies of the Rhineland left under her sovereignty, but forbidden to her Army.

II

By the end of December, M. Clemenceau and I had presented our arguments to Mr. House who appreciated their importance. During the crossing from America, our Ambassador at Washington, M. Jusserand, had talked them

Digitized by Google

over with President Wilson, who had seemed to acknowledge their weight and who, two months later, at the beginning of March, had not yet, according to his most intimate collaborators, any definite objection to them. On the English side, on the contrary, a strong resistance was encountered and the friendly tone in which it was couched in no way lessened its firmness.

The Rhine policy advocated by France had from the beginning been misunderstood by the British ministers. There where France saw an essential guarantee—a guarantee of execution and of security—Mr. Lloyd George and his colleagues, obsessed by memories of Napoleon and by the intemperance of part of our Press, feared as early as 1917 a menace to the peace of Europe. It was in 1917 that Mr. Balfour in two speeches energetically repudiated the idea of a self-governing Rhine State which M. Aristide Briand had suggested the preceding January in a confidential letter to M. Paul Cambon, French Ambassador at London. The British Minister of Foreign affairs had denied that an agreement between the Allies had ever contemplated the creation of independent States on the left bank of the Rhine. "Such a solution," he added, "has never entered into the policy of the British Government." Mr. Lloyd George, for his part, had often repeated: "We must not create another Alsace-Lorraine." He also said: "The strongest impression made upon me by my first visit to Paris was the statue of Strassburg veiled in mourning. Do not let us make it possible for Germany to erect a similar statue." Speeches and remarks revealed, under varying forms, a fear from which the British Government had never freed itself.

The first conversations brought us echoes of this fear. It was unreservedly admitted that we needed guarantees. But the means proposed by us caused alarm. All talk of separation between Germany and the left bank, of military occupation of the latter, of participation in this occupation, was extremely repugnant to our Allies. And, from the

Digitized by Google

outset, they emphasized the fact that other securities were possible, such as disarmament of Germany; the League of Nations; if need be, the complete demilitarization of the left bank of the Rhine. Our Memorandum, published above, had answered these objections. But despite the answer, the objections kept reappearing.

It was towards the beginning of March that the serious discussion began. President Wilson is, at the moment, on the ocean en route for France. Mr. Lloyd George has just returned to Paris. It is decided to prepare the work of the heads of Governments by a conference of three. I represent France, Mr. Philipp Kerr, Great Britain, and Doctor Mezes, the United States. We meet twice, on March 11 and 12, in Mr. Lloyd George's apartment at 23 rue Nitot. I explain verbally, in all its details the proposals of my Memorandum of February 25. As my explanation proceeds, I become conscious of the psychological barrier just mentioned. I am offered a strengthening of the disarmament clauses. I am offered a reinforcement of those dealing with demilitarization. As soon as I return to the question of occupation, opposition becomes more marked.

Mr. Mezes says little. These eight hours of discussion are a dialogue between Mr. Kerr and myself, and it is evident that through the voice of his Chief Secretary it is the British Prime Minister himself who—invisible but present—speaks with some reserve at the first meeting, more emphatically at the second. Is it possible, objects my opponent, to occupy a German territory, bridgeheads included, inhabitated by seven million Germans? Is it possible, on the other hand, to separate these Germans from Germany without consulting them and thus to betray the very principles for which the Allies have fought? French tradition? But years have passed, and the historical argument has been too much used and abused by Germany against France, for France to be willing to make use of it against Germany. Besides, in her official declarations, both by her Government and her Parliament (December 30,

Digitized by Google

1916, January 10 and June 5 and 6, 1917, and November 4, 1918) France made no such demands. So it is impossible to participate in such an occupation. So, also, it would cause deep regret if France sought to undertake it alone; and Mr. Kerr sums up his objection as follows:

"In a word we quite agree with France as to the object to be attained. We are not sure we agree with her as to the method to be employed.

"We do not agree to military occupation. England is equally opposed both to a permanent Army, and to the use of British troops outside of English territory. Furthermore occupation tends to create a nationalist irritation not only on the left bank of the Rhine but throughout all Germany. It may at the same time foster in Anglo-Saxon countries a propaganda unfavourable to the Allies, and especially to France. Besides, Germany being disarmed, is occupation necessary?

"Nor do we agree as to the creation of an independent State on the left bank of the Rhine. We see in it a source of complication and of weakness. If, after a longer or shorter period, this independent State asserts its will to reunite with Germany, what shall we do? If Press propaganda or public meetings with this end in view go on within its territory, are the troops of occupation to be used to prevent it? If local conflicts occur, whither will they lead? If war results from these conflicts, neither England nor her Dominions will have that deep feeling of solidarity with France which animated them in the last war.

"It is, therefore, impossible for us to accept the solution you propose."

I reply. I recall that the Rhinelanders are not Prussians. I show that the French proposal excluding annexation is the reverse of imperialistic; that the control of the League of Nations gives every facility for evolution; that France, after such unparalleled sufferings, has a right to insist upon the acceptance of the methods of her choice. Public opinion is hostile? Public opinion must be enlight-

Digitized by Google

ened. It has already learned much during the war, and first of all this, that France is the sentinel of the Overseas Democracies. Besides in default of occupation, what guarantee is there that the treaty will be fulfilled? And I added:

"You say that England does not like English troops to be used away from home. It is a question of fact. England has always had troops in India and Egypt. Why? Because she knows that her frontier is not at Dover. But, the last war has taught her that her European frontier is on the Rhine and that the Rhine is more important to her than even the Suez Canal or the Himalayas.

"You say that the British public does not understand this question. It is the duty of the British Government to make it understand. Neither did the English public understand in 1914 the necessity of conscription. War has taught it many things.

"You say that there is a danger of provoking nationalist irritation in Germany. The German defeat has already created this feeling. Wherefore, then, the need of protection against a risk which will exist in any case?

"You say that the Rhineland will revolt. Our answer is that fear of Bolshevism and dread of war-taxes dominate the Rhinelander, and that, moreover, we are not threatening them with annexation. We are offering them independence. Other peoples—the Germans of Bohemia, for instance—will, under the Treaty, have to accept a foreign sovereignty.

"If you object to a possible resistance of British opinion, we rely on the certain revolt of French opinion against a peace which would not include the occupation of the Rhine. England did not feel that the complete surrender of the entire German fleet permitted her to do away with her own. And France will not admit that the partial disarmament of Germany on land—partial, because, for twenty years, she will have at her disposal three million

Digitized by Google

trained men—absolves France from the necessity of taking guarantees.

"To ask us to give up occupation, is like asking England and the United States to sink their fleet of battleships. We refuse.

"We want no annexation. But we want our security. We consider the question a vital one, and I do not even need to consult M. Clemenceau to declare, in his name, that we insist upon our demand."

Accordingly, I hand my friends a draft of seven articles and agree with them that, as no agreement has resulted from our conference, the question will have to be decided by the heads of Governments. The proposal I submitted was as follows:

March 12, 1919.

WESTERN FRONTIER OF GERMANY

1. In the general interest of peace and to assure the effective working of the constituent clause of the League of Nations, the Western frontier of Germany is fixed at the Rhine. Consequently Germany renounces all sovereignty over, as well as any customs union with the territories of the former German Empire on the left bank of the Rhine.

2. The line of the Rhine to be occupied under a mandate of the League of Nations by an inter-allied military force.

The extent and conditions of occupation in German territory of the bridgeheads of Kehl, Mannheim, Mayence, Coblenz, Cologne and Dusseldorf, necessary to the security of inter-allied forces to be fixed by the final Treaty of Peace. Until the signature of the said Treaty the conditions of occupation established by the Armistice of November 11, 1918, to remain in force.

In a zone of fifty kilometers east of her Western frontier Germany shall not maintain nor erect fortifications.

3. The territories of the left bank of the Rhine (except Alsace-Lorraine) to constitute one or several independent States under the protection of the League of Nations. Their Eastern and Southern frontiers to be fixed by the Peace Treaty. Germany undertakes to do nothing which could hinder the aforesaid State or States in the

Digitized by Google

fulfillment of the duties or the exercise of the rights devolving upon them from the causes or the conditions of their creation.

4. Within one month after the signature of the present preliminaries of peace, the general conditions of evacuation of the higher German and Prussian civil officials at present on duty on the left bank of the Rhine, to be settled by a special agreement between the signatory Powers and the German Government.

5. Within two months from the signature of the present preliminaries of peace, a special agreement between the signatory Powers and the German Government to determine, under the guarantee of the League of Nations, the general conditions of liquidation of the German economic interests on the left bank of the Rhine.

6. The German Government undertakes to furnish every year to the independent State or States, which may be created on the left bank of the Rhine, the amount of coal necessary for their industries. This amount shall be credited to Germany in the general reparations account.

This was on March 12. On the morning of the fourteenth President Wilson arrives in Paris. After an interview with Mr. Lloyd George, he meets the same afternoon M. Clemenceau and the British Prime Minister at a private talk of two hours, without secretary or interpreter at the Hotel de Crillon. M. Clemenceau explains once more the French proposals. He tells our needs, our dangers of yesterday and of to-morrow. Alone against Germany, invaded and bleeding, we ask not for territory, but for guarantees. Those offered to us—disarmament, demilitarization, League of Nations—are inadequate in their present form. Occupation is indispensable. It is essential that this occupation be inter-allied. It is essential that the left bank be closed to the political and military schemes of Germany. Its independence is at once the condition and the consequence of the foregoing.

At first the same objections are made to the same arguments. But to the great Frenchman who holds his ground and sticks to his original demands, an entirely different and most capital proposal is soon made. Great

Digitized by Google

Britain, with her century-old pride in her splendid isolation, the United States, "too proud to fight," separated from the rest of the world by Washington's Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine, offer France a formal pledge of alliance:—their immediate military guarantee against any unprovoked aggression on the part of Germany; an unprecedented and immensely significant proposal which will assure us in peace the same unity of power which enabled us to win the war.

M. Clemenceau, "who asked nothing"—he will recall it with pride before the Senate later—immediately states the very great value he attaches to this offer. But he expresses at the same time his formal desire not to give an immediate answer. He intends before so doing to reflect and to take counsel. The next two days, March 15 and 16, three meetings are held at the Ministry of War between MM. Clemenceau, Pichon, Loucheur and myself, when verbally and in three successive Notes the various aspects of the problem are analyzed and discussed. From this study two conclusions appear, both equally illuminating, and for the moment at least mutually contradictory.

The first is that a French Government which, receiving such an offer under such conditions, would allow it to escape would be guilty of a crime. The second, that a French Government satisfied with only this and nothing more would be equally guilty. A grave contradiction indeed. For, in the conversation of March 14, Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Wilson have clearly indicated that they offered the military guarantee in lieu of occupation and the independence of the left bank. It is to avoid the latter which they do not wish, that they propose the former which to these two countries so justly proud of their strength seems of equal, if not of greater, value. They recognize as indisputable France's right to the guarantee, demanded by her in the Notes of January 8 and February 19 and 25 and in the conversations of February 6, 19 and 23, and March 11, 12 and 14. But rejecting the method pro-

Digitized by Google

posed by us—and because they reject it—they propose another. The left bank of the Rhine to remain German. The left bank of the Rhine to be occupied neither by an inter-allied nor by a French force. In return, Great Britain and the United States to give France their solemn pledge of immediate military aid in case of danger.

M. Clemenceau's mind is made up on the evening of the sixteenth and his decision expressed in a Note handed to the heads of the Allied Governments on the morning of the seventeenth. A proposal is made to us, which substitutes one guarantee for another. We refuse this substitution. We gratefully note, with the fullest appreciation of its value, the pledge offered and desire to accept it but only on the express condition that it be supplemented by most of the other guarantees demanded by us, first of all, by occupation. This is the text of the Note of March 17, 1919.

NOTE ON THE SUGGESTION MADE MARCH 14

I

RESUMÉ OF THE FRENCH PROPOSAL OF FEBRUARY 25, 1919.

(1) The military occupation of the Rhine by an inter-allied force (with this immediate and lasting result, separation of the left bank from the German Reich and Zollverein) is, in the present state of international relations, a vital necessity for France and of common interest to the Allies. A detailed memorandum has proved this assertion.

The object is to prevent the renewal of that which we have undergone twice in fifty years and for that to deprive Germany of her essential means of attack (the left bank, the railroads and the bridges of the Rhine).

As a guarantee of this the military occupation of the Rhine border is indispensable to France, with a far smaller population than Germany, deprived of Russia's alliance, and without good natural frontiers.

Digitized by Google

On the other hand the Overseas Democracies cannot fight in Europe if the French ports and railroads are not substantially protected. The last war demonstrated how serious for them is this danger which might completely deprive them of a European battlefield.

(2) The limitation of the military forces of Germany is not a sufficient guarantee against this danger until experience has proved the method efficacious, and especially so long as Germany has at her disposal more than three million men who are trained to war, because they fought in war. The total suppression of the German fleet was not sufficient reason for the naval countries to disarm their own fleets. On land, France, too, has need of physical guarantee.

The League of Nations is also not a sufficient guarantee. The present draft of its clauses makes final victory almost certain. But the League is too slow moving a mechanism to prevent territorial invasion at the beginning of a war. Here also, therefore, a physical guarantee is necessary.

This physical guarantee is the military occupation of the Rhine and the control of its bridge traffic.

(3) The objections presented do not modify this conclusion.

It is feared on the left bank that there may be a movement for union with Germany. But the left bank is different from the rest of Germany. It fears Bolshevism and war-taxes. It is conscious of its economic independence. It has no liking for Prussian officials forced upon it by the Empire. Separatist tendencies are already making themselves felt despite the strict reserve we have maintained.

A nationalist irritation in Germany is foreseen. Defeat has aroused this sentiment. The question resolves itself into protecting ourselves against its possible consequences.

It is thought that the proposed solution may be suspected of imperialism. But it is not a question of annexation, it is a question of creating under the safeguard of the League of Nations, an independent State in accordance with the interests of the inhabitants and with the aspirations of a very large number of them. This is not a Bismarckian solution.

Anxiety is expressed concerning the effect upon British and American opinion. But the whole lesson of the war is that the Rhine is the military frontier not only of France and Belgium, but of the Overseas Democracies as well, "The Frontier of Freedom,"

Digitized by Google

as President Wilson expressed it. These Democracies will understand this as they understood the necessity of conscription during the war, as British democracy understands to-day the channel tunnel.

The danger is pointed out of the indefinite duration of the occupation. But as the entire organization of the left bank is to be in the hands of the League of Nations, the latter will always have the right to alter it.

Therefore, the physical guarantee which will make impossible a renewal of the 1914 situation, remains of vital necessity to France in the present state of international relations.

II

EXAMINATION OF THE SUGGESTION PRESENTED BY OUR ALLIES

(1) The suggestion presented on March 14, that Great Britain and the United States should pledge themselves in case of aggression by Germany to bring their military forces to the aid of France without delay, is a recognition that France needs a special guarantee; but in place of the physical guarantee demanded by France it substitutes a political guarantee designed to curtail by a definite pledge the time which would elapse between the menace of war and the joint action of the Allied forces.

The French Government fully appreciates the great value of such a guarantee, which would profoundly change the international situation, but this guarantee to be effective must be supplemented and defined.

(2) In the first place there will always be, on account of distance, a period in which France attacked will have to defend herself single-handed without her overseas Allies; she must be able to do this under fairer conditions than in the past.

On the other hand, it is important there should be no doubt about the substance and scope of the pledge—that is as to the obligations imposed upon Germany, the methods of their enforcements, the nature of the act which shall constitute a menace of war, the right of France to defend herself against it, and the importance of the military aid to be furnished by Great Britain and the United States.

(3) In other words, before we can consider giving up the first guarantee (a material guarantee founded on space) it is essen-

Digitized by Google

tial that the second guarantee (founded on time, that is on the speedy aid of our Allies) lend itself to no uncertainty and that it be supplemented by some of the other safeguards contained in the first guarantee.

It is really not possible for France to give up a certain safeguard for the sake of expectations.

III

POSSIBLE BASES OF AGREEMENT

Wishing to respond to the suggestion which has been made to it, the French Government thinks it its duty to set out in detail the general bases upon which agreement might be reached, these bases being the minimum guarantees indispensable to France.

It should be agreed, in the first place, that:

In case Germany, in violation of the peace conditions imposed upon her by the Allied and Associated Governments, should commit an act of aggression against France, Great Britain and the United States would bring to France the aid of their military forces.

Therefore:

(1) The date and the conditions of evacuation of the bridgeheads on the right bank, and of the territories on the left bank of the Rhine, to be fixed by the Peace Treaty (as one of the guarantees to be taken for the execution of the financial clauses).*

(2) Germany to maintain neither military force nor military organization on the left bank of the Rhine nor within fifty kilometers east of the river. The German Army to be forbidden to manœuvre there. Recruiting to be forbidden there—even appeals for volunteers. Fortifications to be demolished there. No new fortifications to be erected there. No war material to be mnaufactured there. (Certain of these clauses already figure in the preliminary peace proposals: but in the present hypothesis it would be necessary to strengthen them.)

(3) Great Britain, the United States and France to have the right to satisfy themselves by means of a permanent Commission of Inspection that the conditions imposed upon Germany are complied with. (For without this right the preceding clause would be worthless.)

(4) Great Britain, the United States and France to agree to

*In other words an occupation for thirty years.

Digitized by Google

consider as an act of aggression any entry or attempted entry of all or any part of the German Army into the zone fixed in paragraph 2.

(5) Furthermore, Great Britain and France to recognize the right of France to occupy the line of the Rhine with five bridgeheads of a radius of twenty kilometers in case Germany, in the opinion of the Commission of Inspection, should violate the terms of paragraph 2 or any one of the military, aerial, and naval clauses of the peace preliminaries. (*In fact, if France gives up after thirty years' permanent occupation she must at least in case of danger of war resulting from Germany's violation of her pledges, be able to advance her troops to the only good defensive position, that is to the Rhine.*)

(6) Great Britain and the United States to recognize to France her frontier of 1814 and by way of reparation the right of occupation without annexation of that part of the coal basin of the Sarre not included within this frontier.

P. S. *It goes without saying that by act of aggression against France, the French Government also means any aggression against Belgium.*

The French Note of March 17 marks the beginning of negotiations in which twice a day up to April 22, we kept up our efforts. Our object? To obtain the proffered guarantee but with the addition of occupation—and a few other safeguards which to the minds of our Allies were to be replaced purely and simply by their military guarantee.

III

The difficulty which had revealed itself to us on March 14, gained substance in every conference held and in every Note exchanged—English Notes of March 26 and April 2; American Notes of March 28 and April 12, and daily and uninterrupted conferences. On many points we make progress from day to day. For the first plan of disarmament, another and distinctly better one is substituted which does away with conscription and reduces the German Army to 100,000 men serving twelve years. The demilitarization

Digitized by Google

of the left bank is extended to a zone of fifty kilometers on the right bank. The violation of this zone by Germany is to be considered a hostile act. Better still the right of verifying the execution of the military clauses of the Treaty by investigations in Germany is entrusted to the Council of the League of Nations acting by a majority. Finally the Treaties of Guarantee are drafted. But of occupation, no word agreeing to our initial demand, repeated and maintained in our Note of March 17.

It appears that Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Wilson are now in complete agreement against any occupation. On the twenty-sixth, the British Prime Minister hands his colleagues a General Note on the peace, in which after insisting on the danger of too drastic a peace he sums up his point of view regarding the left bank of the Rhine as follows:

> No attempt to be made to separate the Rhenish provinces from the rest of Germany.
>
> These provinces to be demilitarized, that is, the inhabitants of this territory will not be permitted to bear arms or receive any military training or to be incorporated in a military organization either on a voluntary or a compulsory basis; and no fortifications, dépots, establishments, railway construction, or works of any kind adapted to military purposes will be permitted to exist within this area. No troops to be sent into this area for any purpose whatsoever, without previous notification to the League of Nations.
>
> As France is naturally anxious about a neighbor who has, twice within living memory, invaded and devastated her land with surprising rapidity, the British Empire and the United States undertake to come to the assistance of France with their whole strength in the event of Germany moving her troops across the Rhine without the consent of the Council of the League of Nations. This guarantee to last until the League of Nations has proved itself to be an adequate security.

Mr. Wilson also in a Note of April 12 forcefully recalls the scope and importance of his proposals of March 14 and 27, which were identical with those of Mr. Lloyd George, and he adds with great gravity:

Digitized by Google

It will be recalled that these proposals were made jointly with Mr. Lloyd George who made practically identical proposals with regard to the action of Great Britain.

Both Mr. Lloyd George's proposals and my own, were made after repeated consideration of all other plans suggested, and they represent the maximum of what I myself deem necessary for the safety of France, or possible on the part of the United States.

Every day, often twice a day, M. Clemenceau renewed his efforts:

"I beg to point out," he said, "that on the seas this guarantee has already been provided. Germany no longer has a Navy. We must have an equivalent guarantee on land. America is far away, protected by the ocean. Even Napoleon could not reach England. You are both under cover. We are not. No man has less of the militaristic spirit than I. But we want safety."

Mr. Lloyd George kept to his invariable formula.

"You must fully understand the state of mind of the British public. It is afraid to do anything whatsoever which might repeat the mistake Germany committed in annexing Alsace-Lorraine."

We repeat our arguments, ever more urgent and direct. We recall the fact that the English put Prussia in; or allowed Prussia to put herself, on the left bank of the Rhine in 1815. They know what it has cost them. We show how they have continued to assure their own safety by a Navy superior to that of all other powers combined. Can they be astonished then that France desires a physical guarantee on the Rhine? England has asked France not to question her naval policy which enabled the war to be won, but which restricted the liberty of neutrals. France whose Army saved the world on land, as the English Fleet saved it on the seas, thinks it just that for her safety on which the safety of all is dependent, a similar guarantee and restriction should be acceded to. On March 31, M. Clemenceau summoned Marshal Foch and the Commanders-in-

Digitized by Google

Chief of the Allied Armies before the Council of the Four. The Marshal of France once more presents the argument of his Notes of November 27, and January 10. He then reads a new report summarizing the others. This is its conclusion:

To sum up, unless we hold the Rhine permanently, no neutrality, no disarmament, no written clause of any kind, can prevent Germany from seizing the Rhine and debauching from it at an advantage.

The Rhine remains to-day the barrier essential to the safety of the peoples of Western Europe, and therefore, of civilization.

In the circumstances, it seems difficult to refuse to the nations in the forefront of battle—France and Belgium— the protection they deem indispensable to enable them to live and fight until their Allies arrive.....

Whether the inhabitants of the left bank of the Rhine remain German or not, the political frontier between the Western European nations and Germany is the Rhine.

I urge with all my strength upon the Allied and Associated Governments, which in the most critical hours of the war entrusted to me the conduct of their armies and the future of our common cause, to consider that the future can only be permanently assured —to-morrow as it was yesterday—by the military frontier of the Rhine and its occupation by the Allies. This essential position must therefore be held.

Everyone listens attentively. But not one of the Allied Generals supports the Commander-in-Chief. On April 4, the King of the Belgians joins the Conference of the heads of the Governments but he too does not express himself in favour of an extended occupation. We are alone. The atmosphere is tense. Overseas newspapers grow aggressive. Some French papers are no less so. In two days, Mr. Lloyd George gives out two soothing interviews, the effect of which does not last. Subordinates are nervous, and make blunders. In spite of Mr. House, the mendacious news is published that the *George Washington* has been hurriedly summoned to Brest.

Digitized by Google

M. Clemenceau holds his ground unmoved. We send Note upon Note (March 19, 20, 22, 28 and 31, and April 4, 5, 15, 16 and 19). We show that no matter how important the results attained it remains indispensable to give the Treaty a guarantee of execution, to give to France a material safeguard against a Germany which because of the war will have millions of trained soldiers for years to come. We show that occupation alone meets this double need. Days pass.

At last M. Clemenceau's indomitable will wins its end. Light begins to break. Slowly, prudently and patiently, he widens the opening and on April 20 at six o'clock in the evening he secures—first of all—from President Wilson his approval of the provisions of Chapter 14. On the morning of April 22, Mr. Lloyd George gives his approval also, but not without again renewing his objections. M. Clemenceau, who for two days has been in agreement with President Wilson, maintains all his points—duration of the occupation, its possible extension; participation by the Allies. Mr. Lloyd George ends the discussion:

"Very well, I accept."

The long debate is over. Despite divergencies of opinion, the personal relations between the three men during those forty days have never ceased to be sincere, calm and affectionate. May their fellow countrymen never forget it!

The inter-allied occupation of the left bank and the bridgeheads of the Rhine are fixed at fifteen years. Evacuation is to be by zones, every five years, but only on condition that Germany faithfully complies with the Peace Treaty. If faithful compliance is lacking, there is to be no evacuations at five-year intervals. Even at the end of fifteen years, we retain in any event, a safeguard; if the guarantees against an unprovoked German aggression are deemed insufficient, there is to be no evacuation.* Finally, if, after evacuation, Germany fails in her obligations to

*See Chapter VI, page 209, and following.

Digitized by Google

pay, there is to be re-occupation by all the Allies,—not by France alone. Remember that, from the beginning of January to the end of April, the participation of the Allies in the occupation and even occupation itself had been refused us; that as a substitute we had been offered the two Treaties of Guarantee and that at the end of the discussion we had both the treaties and the occupation. We had gone a long way.

But such was, notwithstanding the advantages won by M. Clemenceau, the attachment of some great men to our original proposal that, even before the agreement was made public, strong opposition broke out. Hardly was the discussion between the Allies closed than it began between the French. Marshal Foch, whose views the French Government had so strongly defended, feels that the time limits accepted by M. Clemenceau destroy the value of the guarantee. He does not hide his way of thinking, even from the Press. On April 17, he refuses to transmit to General Nudant, President of the Armistice Commission and representative of the Allied and Associated Governments in their dealings with the German Government, the convocation which the Council of Four has decided to address to the enemy plenipotentiaries for April 25. On the eighteenth *Le Matin* publishes an article (inspired by him and the proofs of which had been corrected by one of his officers) against the conditions of peace. Then it is an interview in the *Daily Mail*, the reproduction of which is forbidden in the French Press by the Censorship, but which none the less has its echo in the lobbies of Parliament where a resolution is prepared to be presented in the Senate.

These incidents, and others as well, create a certain amount of friction in Allied circles. They oblige M. Clemenceau to defend the Commander-in-Chief with some warmth against the criticisms of some heads of Governments who blame his recent interventions. M. Clemenceau regrets them as much as they do. But he makes it plain—with generous foresight—that the men of victory must stick

Digitized by Google

together and "that the image they hold in the nation's mind be not broken." The discussion is somewhat sharp. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Wilson take the view that the Commander-in-Chief has no right to adopt the attitude he has assumed in the past two days. They say:

"We very willingly placed our Armies under the supreme command of a French General for whom we have the highest admiration and the deepest gratitude. But this General, no matter how great his glory, is an obstacle to the decisions of the Governments. We cannot accept this situation and permit the authority we have conferred to be turned against us. It is a fundamental question of constitutional responsibility."

They add:

"We are to-day as yesterday, ready to accept a French General as Commander-in-Chief. But we must have a General who obeys the Governments."

M. Clemenceau, to gain time, himself sends to General Nudant the message which Marshal Foch had declined to transmit and on the eighteenth in the evening asks M. Poincaré to summon Marshal Foch. On the nineteenth the heads of the Allied Governments asked M. Clemenceau what he had done in the matter. M. Clemenceau replies that he is going to see the Marshal immediately after the Council, and that the next day he will be able to inform them. As we were leaving the Hotel Bischoffsheim M. Clemenceau says to me:

"Foch is coming presently. Although he has unquestionably put himself in the wrong, I want to get him out of it. I don't want the Chief of Victory to be touched."

I ask him if he expects to succeed. He answers:

"I think so."

Marshal Foch arrives at a quarter past six at the Ministry of War. M. Clemenceau explains the situation to him. The Marshal, somewhat embarrassed, says that he has been misunderstood; that he made objections but that he does not refuse to send the convocation to the Germans; that he knows nothing of the newspaper articles. M. Clemenceau reminds him that he wrote a letter of refusal on

Digitized by Google

receipt of the order to transmit the convocation. He cites the name of the officer of his staff who went to correct the proofs. The Marshal remains silent. M. Clemenceau says to the Marshal:

"Come, you are sorry for all that, aren't you?"

The Marshal answers:

"I regret it with all my heart."

M. Clemenceau, full of cordiality, begs him not to allow himself to be used by papers and politicians and as he shows him out, he pats him on the shoulder with friendly bruskness:

"Look here," he says, "they are pulling your leg. Don't let 'em."

And the Marshal smiling answers:

"All right. I will call off my dogs of war."

A frank avowal by the great soldier of the pressure that his over-wrought entourage has brought to bear upon him. M. Clemenceau is now sure of adjusting the matter which, from the very first, he had been anxious to do. He telephones the result of his interview to M. Poincaré and the next morning, April 20, at ten o'clock, he informs Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Wilson that the matter is settled, that there has been a misunderstanding, that Marshal Foch is sorry and that all is well. The two heads of Governments let the matter drop. Thus, thanks to M. Clemenceau, thanks to his firm and prudent stand, thanks to the great moral influence with his colleagues, the incident was closed.

But the conflict reappears on April 25, at the Cabinet meeting, in the final sitting when the whole French Government is to pass upon the Treaty. Marshal Foch, specially invited to be present by M. Clemenceau, renews his criticisms. He is listened to with attention. He withdraws. The Cabinet deliberates and after two hours of discussion unanimously approves the Treaty. But even that is not all, and on May 6, at the plenary session of the Conference twenty-four hours before the Treaty is handed to the Germans, the illustrious leader of the victorious Armies once more makes heard his protest:

Digitized by Google

"Chapter XIV," he says, "provides as guarantee for reparations, the occupation of the country on the left bank of the Rhine for a period of five, ten, or fifteen years. Could we discuss the question at length, it would be easy to prove that, from the military point of view, this guarantee amounts to nothing and that it will become an increasing burden upon the Allied Armies. Before going any further, therefore, I wish to state that the guarantee represented by Chapter XIV or Section XIV—I do not remember which—is in my judgment equal to zero, all the while involves us in increasing military expenses. This is the first reservation that I make!

"Moreover, according to my understanding, we shall hold the Rhine for five years as a military guarantee and as a means of assuring our indemnities. After five years, and by the tenth year, we would abandon the Rhine, from the Dutch frontier to below Cologne—that is a space of more than two hundred kilometers out of the five hundred held by us.

"Right now I would call attention that from the point of indemnities, this means giving up the greatest industrial area in the occupied territory and the bridgeheads which furnish access to the basin of the Ruhr, the principal source of Germany's wealth, which we no longer menace and whose seizure we renounce.

"After ten years, we give up eighty additional kilometers of the Rhine line, from Cologne to beyond Coblenz. Eventually, after fifteen years, the Rhine barrier will be abandoned along the whole length of the occupied territory, and France will find herself with her frontier of 1870—that is with no military guarantee, whatsoever. After fifteen years, as you see, we shall have no further guarantee for the indemnities. Therefore, I state that, in this respect, Section XIV is completely ineffectual. As payments and indemnities are to continue for thirty years, we shall find ourselves for fifteen years with guarantees more or less restricted and, after those fifteen years, with none at all.

"I call your attention to this lack of military guarantees.

Digitized by Google

On the other hand, reoccupation of the occupied territory, during or after this fifteen-year period, is contemplated, in case Germany should fail to execute part or all of the Treaty which she signed. Who is to decide upon the advisability of this reoccupation? The Reparation Commission. For all violations of the Treaty clauses—even those which have no connection with indemnities, whether they be of a military or of an administrative nature—the Commission on Indemnities will be the one to intervene and say 'Clause so-and-so has been violated. Therefore, reoccupation of the occupied territory is in order.' Is the Commission alone qualified to do this? Furthermore, in the question of indemnities, it will be the part of the Commission to establish any violation of clauses that do not figure in the Treaty, since they are not to be established until a period following the signing of the Treaty. This jurisdiction is not sufficient.

"To sum up, the Treaty assures complete guarantees for a period of five years, during which Germany will doubtless be in a position to do no harm. But, from that time on, as German power returns and our danger increases, our guarantees decrease, until, at the end of fifteen years, they disappear altogether. After this period, there will be no further means of enforcing payment from an enemy which has thirty years in which to pay, while all the time the Allied expenses will be mounting up.

"In short, it is an indisputable fact that, in order to occupy a line other than the Rhine line and establish a strong barrier on this side of the river, more troops will be necessary. Our expense, therefore, will increase as our guarantees decrease, until they reach zero. At the same time, during the fifteen years, we shall have other losses to make good.

"There is only one way to hold the enemy to his engagements, and that is to maintain the occupation of the Rhine. With only a few forces on the Rhine, we can in fact prevent all action on the part of Germany, and reserve all action for ourselves.

Digitized by Google

"These are the observations I have to present on Section XIV. I ask that all these provisions be re-examined, especially by the military experts of the Allied Nations.

"If I were asked what solution I have to suggest, I should answer as follows: 'The question of the Rhine bank is absolutely conditional upon the Rhine. Everything is regulated by this river. Master of the Rhine, means master of the whole country.' Not to be on the Rhine means losing everything. We have a comparison close at hand. If we wished to defend ourselves in this room, we should need only to hold the doors to keep the enemy from entering. Inversely if we lose the doors, the enemy can enter. And so, as long as we hold the barriers of the Rhine, we shall be complete masters on the left bank, at little expense. If, on the contrary, we give up the Rhine, we shall need a large force to hold a land where, in any case, our position will be weak, since the enemy will be free to come and attack us when he will.

"From a military point of view, therefore, the Rhine alone is important. Nothing else counts. Occupation of the Rhine bank is valueless unless we seize the Rhine. If we fall back, we will, as I have said, give up our pledges, we will open the doors, and place ourselves in a position of inferiority, because we shall be obliged to occupy a country that has no obstacles, to keep in it a much larger Army—in a word to occupy it in a much more expensive manner.

"The most economical and the surest way is to maintain the occupation of the Rhine. It may be that I am mistaken. That is why I ask the other military experts to join me in going over this chapter again. How long should the Rhine be held? Just as long as we wish to keep our guarantee, since there are no others. When we find we have been paid, and that we have sufficient guarantees, we shall only have to retire our troops and leave.

"Take note that I ask for the occupation of the Rhine, and not for that of the Rhine land. It is on this point that our opinions disagree. I have been criticized for wishing to occupy a country. That is quite inexact. I wish to occupy

Digitized by Google

the passage of the Rhine,—an occupation which will require a very small military force.

"When the execution of the Treaty shall have been carried forward, when the German countries have given evidence of unmistakable good faith, and disarmament has gone into effect, the expenses of everybody—Allies and Germans—can be lightened by reducing the Army of Occupation. This will be accomplished, as you see, not by giving up ground, but by reducing the actual numbers of the occupying Army.

"To sum up, from the military point of view, I state absolutely that we must stay on the Rhine, and that we must not abandon this line, or even part of it, unless we wish to assume a burden of expense, weaken our position, and stand without guarantees at the end of a certain time. These observations apply to the whole line of the Rhine, from Cologne to Coblenz and Mayence.

"These are the chief observations I wished to make. I ask that they be given consideration, and that some action be taken with regard to my statement, for I cannot allow these provisions to pass unchallenged. I have not seen the text of the Treaty. I may be mistaken, but I ask, again, that, if the text be thus, it be given for examination to military experts, who will see to what extent it may be modified."

The Government heads held a meeting immediately. This statement created more surprise than emotion. On the one hand, the Marshal placed himself on financial grounds which escaped his competence and propounded a theory of guarantees which figures reduced to absurdity.* On the other hand, from the military point of view, he arbitrarily ignored a certain number of facts which had to be taken into account in any case: first the unswerving opposition of the Anglo-Saxon countries to indefinite occupation; then the offer made by them to France to bring her their armed assistance in case of German aggression;

*See Chapter X, page 334.

Digitized by Google

finally the right obtained by M. Clemenceau not to evacuate in five-year periods if Germany violated her financial undertakings, and not to evacuate at the end of fifteen years if at that time the guarantees, that is to say, the British and American Treaties, seemed insufficient* and to reoccupy after evacuation if any violation by Germany was proved. All these provisions together gave satisfaction to the demands of the Commander-in-Chief. Besides, his demands had varied. In his Note of November 27, 1918, the Marshal had asked that the German inhabitants of the left bank of the Rhine be "included in the French military establishment." This was an extreme proposal amounting to annexation in disguise which had never been endorsed by the French Government. But the Marshal himself had quickly abandoned it. In his Note of January 10, the Commander-in-Chief confined himself to demanding the occupation of the Rhine and of its strategic points while seeking a suitable political status for its inhabitants. On March 31 he had read a Note of similar tenor and in the course of the discussion which had followed he had said:

"Peace can only be guaranteed by the possession of the Rhine till further orders, that is to say till Germany has a change of heart."

On May 6, he had insisted in his premises upon the execution of the financial clauses of the peace, in his conclusion upon the limited object of his demand—occupation not of the left bank but of the Rhine; occupation limited in time and scope, "when we find we have been paid and have sufficient safeguards, *we shall only have to retire our troops and leave.*" If this is compared with the clauses of the Treaty itself, what difference is there? Very little,—for, as on one hand, the faculty of prolonging the occupation after fifteen years is assured to France; and on the other, because the suggestion of the Marshal to occupy the river without the left bank would plainly have been in case of conflict a grave imprudence to the troops thus thrust forward.

*See Chapter VI, page 211.

Digitized by Google

Such was, on the evening of May 6, the unanimous feeling of the heads of Governments who at once meet in M. Pichon's room. After a brief exchange of news it is clear that Marshal Foch had advanced no argument that had not already been discussed. It was therefore decided to maintain the clauses of the Treaty. But on the other hand, the matter adjusted with such difficulty by M. Clemenceau twenty days before, was revived. One of the British delegates, Mr. Bonar Law, known for his habitual restraint, declares:

"If a British General adopted such an attitude towards his Government, he would not retain his post for five minutes."

M. Clemenceau answered:

"You know my opinion. No matter how much I regret the attitude of the Marshal, we cannot forget that he led our soldiers to Victory."

The matter rested there. The next day the Treaty was handed to the Germans.

IV

We had gone a long way, as I said above, but we still had a long way to go. On May 29, the German delegation presented over the signature of Count Brockdorff its "remarks on the conditions of peace." Chapter XIV was more especially denounced as an odious abuse of power. There was great uneasiness everywhere: in the Conference, in the Parliaments, even among the public. "Will they sign?" was the question on everyone's lips, and on how to make them sign there was wide divergence of opinion. M. Clemenceau, a few days later, summed up the disagreement as follows:

"There are two ways. Some wish to make concessions. We favour decisive action."

No question showed this divergence of views more clearly than that of occupation. At the end of May, Mr. Lloyd

Digitized by Google

George expressed his regret at having allowed himself to be convinced too quickly by the arguments of his French colleague. In the stormy atmosphere of the beginning of June, the concession made to our urgent demand seemed to him to be the greatest mistake that had been made, one which might perhaps lead to-morrow to a renewal of the war. A new discussion was beginning. On four, six, ten occasions the question of occupation was opened up in earnest. The Treaty leaves the Germans only 100,000 men —is it against that that an Army is to be kept on the Rhine? Germany has damages and pensions to pay. Is a great part of her resources to be used to pay for Armies of Occupation? The Germans are at the highest pitch of national excitement. There is no telling what incidents may arise from this system employed in 1815 and 1871. The Treaties of Guarantee henceforth bind the overseas nations to come to the aid of France. If danger arises from such an incident, those nations will be reluctant to recognize their obligations and their moral strength will not be back of their material strength, as in the late war. Protests are already pouring in from other sources. Labor and democratic circles condemned the occupation as unjust, moderates as absurd and useless. It is a matter of sentiment, not of logic, they say. It should never have been accepted. At least it must be greatly restricted.

"I fear," said Mr. Lloyd George, "that we rallied too quickly to the idea of a prolonged occupation. In my opinion, the whole scheme should be reconsidered.

"I accepted the occupation, it is true. But since then I have held four meetings of Imperial War Cabinet and our delegates to the Peace Conference. They are unanimous in their belief that I did wrong, and that I should have given you the choice between the occupation and the Treaty of Guarantee.

"Occupation is useless since Germany will have only 100,000 men and Great Britain and the United States also will be on the side of France in case of aggression. It is illogical because it is only much later in fifty or sixty years

Digitized by Google

that Germany will become dangerous. It is unjust because it amounts to making Germany pay for the cost and upkeep of the French Army. It is ruinous because it will absorb to the detriment of the indemnity fund the best part of the German resources. It is dangerous because unpopular, inspired by the methods of 1815 and 1871, and of a nature to give rise to local incidents which will arouse Anglo-Saxon sympathy for Germany.

"That is the conclusion I draw from my recent interviews. I reproach you with nothing. I accuse myself only of having yielded too quickly last April to your arguments. If you persist, I shall be forced to leave Paris and go to London to submit the question to Parliament."

For three long weeks, from May 23 to June 13, M. Clemenceau, unmoved and unflinching, continued to answer:

"I cannot accept a reversal of the decision already made.

"You know my policy. It is wholly based upon the close union of France with Great Britain and the United States. On that account I am attacked on every side as weak and inadequate. I am sure that in persisting I am serving my country well and so I persist. But in this question of occupation you do not understand the French point of view. You are in your island, behind the rampart of the sea. We are on the continent, with a worthless frontier. My country suffered more than any other from the Germans. We know them better than you do.

"What we fear in the years to come is not a German attack, but systematic failure to execute the Treaty. No treaty ever contained so many clauses; and no treaty, therefore ever involved so many risks of non-execution. Against these risks, we want the material guarantee of an occupation and we intend to retain it as long as may be necessary to form our opinion as to Germany's good faith. In exchange for the two treaties of immediate assistance, I shortened the duration of occupation I had originally demanded. But as I wished to provide for everything, I also asked—and you agreed—that occupation might in certain events be prolonged beyond the fifteen years. All that has

Digitized by Google

been accepted. I cannot consent to having the question reopened again.

"So much for the guarantee. But we also need in the coming years a barrier behind which our people can work in security and rebuild their ruins. That barrier is the Rhine. I must reckon with national feeling. I do not mean that I am afraid of being overthrown, that does not matter. But I cannot by giving up occupation do something that would take the very backbone out of our people's life.

"Besides it is your interest as well as ours. For in the union of our three countries, France also is indispensable.

"There are now two methods under consideration. We are all anxious to settle the matter. But in England it is believed that the way to succeed is by making concessions. In France we believe that it is by taking decisive action. I will have none of a policy begging Germany's pardon for our victory. I know them too well. I have known them too long. The whole world was told of our principles, in war and in peace. We have remained faithful to them. It is our duty to make them triumph. If the Germans feel that peace is imposed by the strong, who have justice on their side, upon the weak, who were the aggressors, they will resign themselves to it.

"I know that you and your colleagues are perfectly sincere, and this is what makes the situation so serious. Weighing my words, I say to you: If you go before your Parliament, I will go before mine and, if need be, resign. But I will not accept what you propose, it is impossible.

"And now I say that I will not even think of such an hypothesis, nor admit that after five years of war, we can be incapable of giving the German a united answer."

Never I believe has the voice of a citizen speaking for his country had greater force or a more persuasive power. On June 13, with the discreet support of Mr. Wilson, M. Clemenceau obtained satisfaction and secured the unreserved agreement of all his colleagues. Chapter XIV was kept in its entirety, without the change of a single word,

Digitized by Google

To inform Germany of this—three days later—the Allies forward a phrase from the President of the United States: "The peace must be guaranteed because, among the contracting parties, are those whose promises have proved unworthy of our faith."

It is the interest of France, the common interest of the Allies that I hope to serve in showing—by the detail of an important discussion—how difficult it is for men—even the most earnest and the most sincere—to reach agreement when these men represent different nations and centuries of opposite traditions. May those who make light of this difficulty never be called upon to face it. In this great discussion the responsible heads of Governments put forward their arguments without the slightest reserve. They passed through difficult hours of total disagreement. They defended their views to the very limit. But they did it in mutual esteem and—it is M. Clemenceau who speaks—"in a conversational and friendly tone, even when having cruel things to say to one another." They felt to the full the iron hand of the conflicting past which weighed upon them. They found themselves—again I quote M. Clemenceau—"more French, more English, more American than they could have believed." But the will to agree was strongest. Agreement was reached, and upon this agreement—now signed and sealed—depends the safety of the world. Without it there would have been neither Victory in War, nor Treaty in Peace, nor Security in the Future.

The French Government has been violently attacked over these very clauses. Its difference of opinion with Marshal Foch—from which M. Clemenceau in his personal feelings suffered very keenly—was unrelentingly employed against it. I have shown that if one looks closely at the Treaty and at the facts, the variation between the clauses of the Treaty and the proposals of the Commander-in-Chief is not very considerable. Occupation for fifteen years it is true. For fifteen years? Yes,—but with possibility of prolonging it and of reoccupying either should Germany prove unfaithful to her undertakings, or should

Digitized by Google

the guarantees contained in the British and American Treaties be inadequate or, *a fortiori*, absent. There is one difference and only one, it is a political not a military difference. The left bank remains German instead of becoming independent. One may regret it. But if we had stuck to the original proposal it would have meant a break with the Allies; the hostile outbreaks of a mixed population, the necessity for intervention with all its risks, the imposition of independence with all its drawbacks. "It is not," as M. Clemenceau told the Senate, "the fault of the Armies of the First Republic if we did not stay on the Rhine. But it is not our fault if to-day when I want to go to the Rhine I find German lands between the Rhine and me,—and if I am obliged to take that into account." Could M. Clemenceau, having obtained satisfaction on all essentials, break with Great Britain on this special point? He did not think so. Who would have proposed it?

Parliament, when, in turn, the question was placed before it, confirmed the decision of the Chief of the Government and of the Cabinet,—the Chamber by 372 votes to 53, and the Senate unanimously. Mr. Barthou, one of M. Clemenceau's opponents, who made the General Report on the Treaty, passed upon this matter with great fairness when he wrote:

> No matter how great the authority of the illustrious General in question, a problem such as this can only be treated by military men from a special, isolated, and very exclusive point of view. To a Government this same problem presents itself as a whole with all its components, which agree or disagree, but none of which is unimportant or negligible.
>
> Between so many reasons it is necessary to make a choice and making this choice means adopting a definite policy.

Mr. Barthou added:

> The French Government, and it is not likely that in its place another government would have acted differently, has secured for France strong guarantees. Can anyone deny their imposing strength? They complete and strengthen each other.

Digitized by Google

On the vital point—the closing to Germany's Army of the Rhine regions and joint occupation by all the Allies—the French proposals prevailed. It was just that they should prevail. The Germans and their friends—for they know how to have friends in every country—have made this an excuse for attacking France. They forget that France never demanded annexation. All that France sought was to avert the risk of invasion, which she has known twice in fifty years. We were determined that *that* should not be renewed. Nothing more, nothing less. Our proposals were as frankly made as they were steadfastly upheld. We modified them on certain secondary points to secure full agreement with our Allies, and to obtain the Treaties of Guarantee. But we did not consent to give up occupation any more than the right to prolong it. We followed this policy in the face of weighty and conflicting opposition—sometimes French, sometimes Allied—because we thought that it was our duty to France. I am still waiting to hear what others would have done in our place.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

TREATIES OF GUARANTEE

It was on March 14, 1919, that Mr. Lloyd George and President Wilson proposed to M. Clemenceau, in place of the inter-allied occupation of an independent Rhineland, the undertaking by Great Britain and the United States to come immediately to the assistance of France in case the latter should be the object of an unprovoked aggression by Germany. I have shown in the preceding chapter how, after five weeks of negotiation, M. Clemenceau obtained at one and the same time the occupation of the Rhineland as well as the two Treaties. The genesis, text and ultimate fate of these solemn and unprecedented undertakings hold an important place in the peace considered as a whole.

I have said "unprecedented;" on that I would lay stress. England in the course of her history has entered into specific and temporary agreements with various continental countries but has never subscribed to any general and permanent obligation. She has at times lent her aid; she has never bound herself in advance to give it. Even in the years before the war—in spite of the ever growing German menace—Great Britain did not bind herself. On August 2, 1914, she was free and could in all independence shape her course. The conversations carried on in 1911, at the time of the Agadir crisis, by the French and English military staffs had been a study of the eventual possibilities of combined action. But nothing had been decided as to the aims and conditions of such action. The letters exchanged, in November, 1912, between Sir Edward Grey, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and the French Ambassador, M. Paul Cambon, left both parties absolutely free. Sir Edward Grey wrote:

Digitized by Google

On various occasions during the past few years, the French and British Military and Naval Staffs have exchanged their views. It has always been understood that these exchanges of views in no way affect the liberty of either of the Governments to decide at any moment in the future whether it shall or not assist the other with armed forces.

We have admitted that exchanges of views between technical experts do not constitute and must not be regarded as constituting an engagement binding either of the Governments to interfere in an eventuality which has not yet presented itself and which may never arise. For example, the present distribution of the French and English Navies is not based upon an undertaking to cooperate in case of war.

When, in presence of the mobilization of the German Army, M. Poincaré addressed an appeal to His Majesty George V asking that Great Britain take her place at France's side in the conflict which was then certain, George V confined his reply, couched in terms of the utmost sympathy, to stating that exchanges of views would continue on all points between his Government and the French Government but that "as far as the attitude of his country was concerned events were changing too rapidly for it to be possible to foresee what would happen." The whole letter is worth quoting:

Buckingham Palace
August 1, 1914

My Dear and Great Friend,

I appreciate most highly the sentiments which inspired you to write me in so cordial and friendly a spirit and I am grateful to you for having set forth your views so fully and frankly.

You may be assured that the actual situation in Europe causes me much anxiety and I am happy to think that our two Governments have worked together in so friendly a manner to try to find a peaceful solution for the questions which have arisen.

It would be for me a source of real satisfaction if our combined efforts met with success; and I am not without hope that the terrible events which seem so near, may still be averted.

I admire the calm that you and your Government have shown in avoiding exaggerated military measures on the frontier and in

Digitized by Google

adopting an attitude that cannot in any manner be construed as a provocation.

I personally am making every effort to find a solution that will permit, in any case, of the adjournment of active military operations and leave to the Powers time for calm discussion among themselves. I intend to pursue these efforts unceasingly, as long as there remains a hope of a friendly settlement. As to the attitude of my country, events are changing so rapidly that it is difficult to foresee what will happen, but you may be assured that my Government will continue to discuss frankly and fully with M. Cambon all points of interest to the two nations.

GEORGE R. I.

On the evening of August 2, the British Government promised us to block the Channel with its fleet in case the German fleet should come out. Nothing more, nothing less. And it was only after the invasion of Belgium that England decided to enter the war. The formal undertaking offered to us by Mr. Lloyd George, on March 14, 1919, was a startling innovation in the development of his country's traditional policy. Had his desire to induce M. Clemenceau to forego the occupation of the Rhineland anything to do with it? Doubtless! But this offer was to an even greater extent, not only on the part of Mr. Lloyd George, but on the part of his country as well, an acceptance of the great lessons of the war; a homage rendered the tremendous effort and unexampled sufferings of France; a token of esteem and affection which honours the British nation as much as it does the French.

On the American side, the break with the past was no less worthy of note. Since Washington's Farewell Address, the United States had remained unswervingly faithful to the policy of aloofness from European affairs which the Father of His Country laid down when leaving office. The Monroe Doctrine a few years later gave form and substance to this policy. Mr. Roosevelt often expressed his regret that his fellow countrymen were unable to grasp the significance of world politics. That they were indeed unable is abundantly proved by the first years of the war.

Digitized by Google

It needed Germany's accumulated provocations and President Wilson's firm decision to enlighten their minds. The war once over, many citizens of the United States, with but summary notions as to the future of the world, desired nothing better than to return to their isolation. Political parties even urged this as a national duty. What reasons prompted President Wilson to ignore these objections and to associate himself with Mr. Lloyd George in the proposal which the latter laid before M. Clemenceau?

I have answered this question by publishing the Memorandum in which the French Government, on February 25, gave the reasons for its Rhineland policy. As a matter of fact it was our arguments on the inadequacy of the guarantee given to France by the Covenant of the League of Nations, that finally convinced Mr. Wilson. When M. Clemenceau, with all the intensity of his patriotic faith, said to him: "The Covenant may guarantee our victory; for the time being it is inadequate to guarantee us from invasion," Mr. Wilson honestly believed this to be true, and sought a solution. On March 28, he put this solution into concrete form, and handed the head of the French Government the following:

> In a separate Treaty with the United States, a pledge by the United States, subject to the approval of the Executive Council of the League of Nations, to come immediately to the assistance of France as soon as any unprovoked movement of aggression against her is made by Germany.

This formula, approved by Mr. Lloyd George, became the basis of the negotiation. A difficult negotiation indeed, because, as I have said and repeat, M. Clemenceau had to derive the maximum of efficiency from the undertakings thus offered and at the same time to obtain the occupation —that is to say the very thing in exchange for which the Treaties of Guarantee had been offered him. The debate on the occupation, longer and more difficult than the other, lasted until April 22.* The actual text of the two pledges was decided upon in the course of the following days.

*See Chapter V.

Digitized by Google

It was proper first of all in urging reasons for them to give them their true meaning. Some political parties—notably the French Socialists—have discovered a contradiction between the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Treaties of Guarantee. Need I, after what I have just written, assert that this contradiction does not exist; or add that these Treaties form an integral part of the fundamental charter of the League and are destined, within its scope and in its service, to establish a security which the League itself might at first have proved incapable of assuring effectively? The two instruments, almost identical in form, make this clear in their preamble:

Whereas there is a danger that the stipulations relating to the left bank of the Rhine contained in the Treaty of Peace, signed this day at Versailles, may not, at first, provide adequate security and protection to the French Republic.

The Treaty with the United States, even more explicit in its statement of reason than that with Great Britain, emphasizes the general importance rather than the particular bearing of a German aggression against France and the union for protection that such an aggression would call forth.

Whereas the United States of America and the French Republic are equally animated by the desire to maintain the peace of the world, so happily restored by the Treaty of Peace signed at Versailles the twenty-eighth day of June, 1919, putting an end to the war begun by the aggression of the German Empire and ended by the defeat of that Power and,

Whereas the United States of America and the French Republic are fully *persuaded that an unprovoked movement of aggression by Germany against France would not only violate both the letter and the spirit of the Treaty of Versailles* to which the United States of America and the French Republic are parties, thus exposing France anew to the intolerable burdens of an unprovoked war, *but that such an aggression on the part of Germany would be, and is so regarded by the Treaty of Versailles, an hostile act against all the Powers signatory to that Treaty* and as calculated to disturb

Digitized by Google

the peace of the world by involving inevitably and directly the States of Europe and indirectly, as experience has unfortunately and amply demonstrated, the world at large.....

The reasons for general solidarity being thus asserted, the manner of giving it effect follows directly and is defined by Articles 2 and 3. Article 2 makes clear that what is involved is not an agreement between two Powers for particular ends, but a common measure of precaution which will come into force simultaneously with ratification by the signatory Powers.

The present Treaty, in similar terms with the Treaty of even date *for the same purpose* concluded between the United States and the French Republic, a copy of which Treaty is annexed hereto, will only come into force when the latter is ratified.

M. Clemenceau's opponents, in the course of the parliamentary debates on the ratification of the Peace Treaty, lyingly asserted that the aid to be furnished by one of the two Powers to the third would always be dependent upon prior negotiations between the first two. The very wording of these two Treaties gives the lie to this fabrication. It is only the coming into force of each Treaty that is put off until the other shall have been ratified. Once this condition is fulfilled, the provisions of both become binding without restriction or reserve, on all the contracting parties. These provisions, to fulfill the obligations assigned them, are to receive the approval of the League of Nations. To this effect:

The present Treaty must be submitted to the Council of the League of Nations and must be recognized by the Council—acting, if need be, by a majority—as an engagement which is consistent with the Covenant of the League.

Here another question arises. How long are the two Treaties to remain in force? Our Allies to make clearer their immediate purpose had at first proposed a period of three years. M. Clemenceau refused this absolutely. In support of his refusal, we drafted a Note which read:

Digitized by Google

The solution of undertaking for three years cannot be accepted by the French Government. First, it is not in the next months that Germany will again become dangerous, it is later. The guarantee would in that case cease to operate at the very moment when most necessary.

But this it not all. The French Government has shown in its Memorandum of February 25 how permanent is the need for the guarantee it demands. This permanent need finds expression in the numerical strength of the French population as compared with that of the German population and in all the history of the last century.

In a general way, the French Government believes that the proposed political guarantee will have its full material and moral value in international public opinion only if it expresses on the clearest lesson of the war unanimity of the three democracies of France, Great Britain and the United States. For this reason also, a temporary pledge should not be considered. Therefore we ask that the Treaties of Guarantee remain in force until such time as their three signatories, France, the United States and Great Britain, shall deem them to have become no longer necessary.

To this end, we proposed the following text which was accepted by President Wilson (Note of April 12):

The pledge to continue until it is considered by *all* the signatory Powers that the League itself affords sufficient protection.

The British Law Officers of the Crown felt that this wording while leaving France sole mistress of the decision, implied an inadmissible restriction of the rights of the Council of the League of Nations which would have to approve the two Treaties. The discussion lasted three days. At last a compromise draft was accepted by France who realized that the worth of Treaties, no matter how formal, is no greater than the good-will of their signatories. This was worded as follows:

The present Treaty will continue in force until, on the application of one of the parties to it, the Council of the League of Nations—acting, if need be, by a majority—agrees that the League itself affords sufficient protection.

Digitized by Google

In these conditions, and by virtue of these principles, the United States declared itself *"bound to come immediately to the assistance of France in the event of any unprovoked movement of aggression against her made by Germany."* Great Britain accepted the same undertaking. In consideration of this dual pledge, M. Clemenceau agreed that, if Germany fully complied with the Treaty, the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine should last only fifteen years and withdrew the demand that by the creation of an independent Rhineland, the Rhine should form the Western frontier of Germany—the left bank and fifty kilometers on the right bank being, moreover, demilitarized and forbidden to German troops.

Thus everything appeared to be settled. But everything being settled, the main problem resulting from this arrangement still confronted the French negotiators and demanded a solution. The guarantee of assistance offered to France by the United States and Great Britain was embodied in the two Treaties which I have just analyzed. On the contrary M. Clemenceau's concession—limitation to fifteen years of the occupation of the left bank if Germany observed faithfully the conditions of the Treaty—found place in the Treaty with Germany. In other words there was a risk that the two elements of the agreements registered in different instruments, might not come into play together. Great Britain and the United States who, in signing these two Treaties, had departed—how far I have already shown—from their common traditions, were parliamentary countries. Their negotiators could therefore bind them only subject to the approval of their respective Parliament. If, the Treaty with Germany having come into force, the House of Commons or the American Senate refused to ratify the Treaties of Guarantee the coming into force of which was mutually dependent upon each other, what would happen? France, bound by the German Treaty to the concession in exchange for which the defensive pledges were given, would have agreed to this sacrifice without compensation and accepted the evacuation at the

Digitized by Google

end of fifteen years, without obtaining American and British military assistance. This was a risk that our country could not accept: it could be thus stated, "If, by failure of either to ratify, the British and American Treaties are lost to us, would we nevertheless at the end of fifteen years be deprived of the material guarantee resulting from the occupation?" The question was disconcerting and a proper answer hard to formulate.

It was, on April 25, that face to face as was his wont M. Clemenceau boldly confronted the difficulty in an interview with President Wilson by saying:

"The Treaty, as it stands, satisfies me on the score of guarantees; but the future belongs neither to you nor to me. You have a Senate and I have a Parliament. We cannot be sure of what they will do ten years hence, or even of what they will do to-morrow. If, for example, the Treaties with the United States and Great Britain were not ratified, what would be France's situation? What alternative guarantee would she have at her disposal?"

President Wilson answered:

"Your observation is perfectly just. But it raises a delicate question. Let us seek a solution."

Prior to this conversation, Chapter XIV of the Treaty (Article 429) relating to guarantees, read as follows:

> If the conditions of the present Treaty are faithfully observed by Germany, the occupation (of fifteen years) provided by Article 428 will be successively reduced as stated below:
>
> (1) At the end of five years...
> (2) At the end of ten years...
> (3) At the end of fifteen years the remainder of the occupied territories will be evacuated.

The right not to evacuate or to reoccupy after evacuation in the event of "Germany's refusing to observe all or part of her obligations concerning reparations," was embodied in Article 429. But anent the situation that would result from the non-ratification of either the English or

Digitized by Google

the American Treaties, not a word! It was this omission that had to be remedied.

The debate lasted for more than a week. On five different occasions the two Presidents exchanged suggestions and drafts. The sequence of these drafts *which are in existence* throws full light upon their common efforts. They arrived on April 29 at the following solution which became the final paragraph of Article 429:

> If, at that date (the end of fifteen years), the guarantees against an unprovoked aggression by Germany are not considered sufficient by the Allied and Associated Governments, the evacuation of the occupying troops may be delayed to the extent regarded as necessary for the purpose of obtaining the required guarantees."

What is the situation created by this additional clause? It is that at the end of fifteen years, on January 10, 1935, the Allied and Associated Governments will, according to the term of the last paragraph, have to decide whether the guarantees against an unprovoked aggression by Germany are or are not sufficient. What are the guarantees referred to? Those provided for at Versailles on June 28, 1919, by the Treaty with Germany and by the two English and American Treaties; that is, in the distant and indefinite future, the League of Nations; in the nearer future, occupation supplemented by the two Treaties. In what case would these guarantees, in 1935, be deemed insufficient? In case of course of the failure of the two Treaties; that is precisely the case actually presented by the negative vote of the American Senate. In this case what may happen? The evacuation may be delayed so long as is deemed necessary to secure the above guarantees.

In other words if, failing the ratification of the British and American Treaties, France in fifteen years has no other guarantee of security than the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and the bridgeheads, this occupation may be prolonged until other guarantees come into existence—that is to say until the coming into force of the two Treaties signed on June 28, or of equivalent agreements. Thus to

Digitized by Google

the hypothetical question put, on April 23, 1919, by the head of the French Government to the President of the United States, and to the practical question raised on March 19, 1920, by the negative vote of the United States Senate, the final paragraph of Article 429 which crowned our efforts, brings a clear and formal answer. This answer whatever may happen safeguards the interests of France. For, in the by no means certain event that the contractual guarantee of the United States and Great Britain fails her, France will retain the physical and territorial guarantee afforded, and instead of retaining it at the risk of a break with her Allies she will hold it by virtue of the Treaty of Versailles itself. In a word, no Treaties of Guarantee, no evacuation in 1935.

Thus balanced, the agreement was equitable and satisfactory. The union publicly asserted against unjust aggression of the three greatest democracies of the world was an appreciable guarantee of stability. Remember the past—remember the last visit of the British Ambassador to Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg on August 2, 1914,—the stupefaction and the consternation of the German on hearing that England is to defend violated Belgium. Consider again that situation; suppose that in the weeks preceding the war, Germany, instead of being condemned by the absence of public pledges between the Western Nations to draw chance inferences concerning England's attitude, had known by the existence of a public Treaty that England would be on the side of Belgium and of France, that the United States would come in also. I think that without undue optimism it may be believed the idea of war would have less easily taken hold of German minds, that their plans of aggression would have vanished. This is the situation created by the Treaties of Guarantee. For the three contracting parties who had learned the lessons of the war, it was the part of logic and of prudent foresight.

For France it was the crowning achievement of the policy followed by M. Clemenceau. On December 29, 1918, the head of the French Government, applauded by the

Digitized by Google

immense majority of the Chamber, had declared his determination to do everything to maintain in peace time complete harmony among the Allies so as to avoid after a victory won by unity a peace of disunion. Not only was this result achieved, but the signing of the Treaty with Germany was accompanied by the signing of agreements perpetuating the coalition against which German force had shattered itself. France there found the just satisfaction of a vital interest. In point of fact the triumphant end of the war had left her alone and unallied. Russia had ceased to be, as regards Germany, the counterweight she had been in the past. The agreements entered into for the war with Great Britain, Belgium, Italy and the United States were valid only for the duration of the war and ended with peace. Where in this peace was France to turn for necessary assistance? Some people rather vaguely and as a timid echo of M. Caillaux's policies, had spoken of a "continental policy." But however dear and precious to France her relations of friendship with her European neighbors, the war itself has proved that no continental Power on our side could take the place of Great Britain and the United States, or bring us anything but an aid which no matter how desirable, could not be decisive. The policy of union with the Anglo-Saxon world remained after victory as before the part of wisdom and of truth.

Not only did this policy bind us to countries whose integrity, vigour and physical and moral soundness we had tested for long months; to countries which in both hemispheres were in touch with us and by their financial, industrial and commercial resources appeared more capable than any others of aiding us in our reconstruction; not only did it afford us the best of means for exercising a just influence within the League of Nations, at the same time as it joined us to two great and liberal nations whose democratic views we are certain of sharing; but in addition by making us one with Powers which by their magnitude and the nature of their interests are obliged both to interest themselves in European affairs and to avoid

Digitized by Google

becoming absorbed therein, this policy placed us on our own continent in the honourable and lucrative position of being the representative and guarantor of the policy of peace which had triumphed in the war. These truths were so well understood by all France that M. Clemenceau's most impassioned opponents did not dare vote against the two Treaties, and that in the Chamber as in the Senate they were unanimously ratified.

But a misfortune has happened—through no fault of France's. The Franco-British Treaty was approved by the House of Commons. Not so the American Treaty which went down in the defeat of the Treaty of Versailles by the Senate in Washington. The Treaty of Versailles lacked six votes for ratification. The Treaty of Guarantee though favourably reported by the Commissions, was not even discussed; so that under Article 2, which provides that these two Treaties shall come into force simultaneously, the treaty with Great Britain is also pending. Need I say that this development has been exploited to the full against the French negotiators, who are accused in France—sometimes even in the United States—with having abandoned the substance for the shadow and renounced part of the substantial guarantees demanded in their Memorandum of February 25, 1919, for the sake of obtaining two Treaties which up to now do not exist? It has also been said that this mistake was the more inexcusable in that no one had the right to ignore the fact that Mr. Wilson was in a minority in Congress following the elections of November 5, 1918. The conclusion drawn is that the non-ratification of the agreements negotiated by him should have been foreseen. This double accusation has held a prominent place in discussions on the peace. Entrusted as I was with Franco-American relations in the Clemenceau Ministry, my desire to leave nothing unrevealed and to give the full facts, will easily be understood.

Moreover, the facts are quite simple; for the two accusations that I have mentioned can harm no one but their authors. We have, it is said, abandoned the substance for

Digitized by Google

the shadow. Look at the last paragraph of Article 429, analyzed a few pages above, and you will see that failing the guarantees against German aggression, embodied in the Franco-British and Franco-American Treaties, the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine can be extended beyond fifteen years. So we did foresee the risk of non-ratification and did adopt appropriate precautions. As to the childish accusation that we ignored the results of the American elections of November 5, 1918, or that we did not allow for their possible consequences—it is to laugh. These elections attracted some attention in the Press. Their possible effect on the ratification of the various Treaties escaped us so little that precisely because of the result, we demanded and obtained by strenuous efforts the final paragraph of Article 429. What more could we have done and what would others have done in our place? Not negotiated with President Wilson, our critics answer. With whom then should we have negotiated? The French Government knew as well as any one that on November 5, 1918, Mr. Wilson had lost his majority in Congress—a mishap that has befallen a number of his predecessors not excepting the greatest among them, George Washington. But it knew also that in spite of this adverse election, Mr. Wilson remained none the less until the end of his term the only constitutional power with whom we could treat; for the President of the United States is responsible not to Congress but to the whole electorate. It is objected that Mr. Wilson in appointing the American delegation has neglected to include Republican Senators. Was this an error of judgment on the part of the President? It is quite possible. But that was none of our business, any more than it would have been Mr. Wilson's or Mr. Lloyd George's business to decide whether M. Clemenceau was right or wrong in not calling upon M. Briand or M. Barthou. The reproach of "having negotiated with Mr. Wilson" is simply absurd—just as absurd in fact as it would be to reproach Mr. Lloyd George with having made important concessions to M. Clemenceau without foreseeing that M.

Digitized by Google

Clemenceau, six months later, would be placed in a minority by M. Deschanel.

These are—whether we look upon it as good or bad—the risks of the parliamentary system. The heads of Governments who negotiated the peace legally represented their respective Governments and it was possible, whether one liked it or not, to negotiate or bargain with them alone. None of them on the other hand could enter into an undertaking except subject to parliamentary ratification, which no one of them could command. These were the very conditions of the undertaking. It was in nobody's power to avoid the contradictions implied in these conditions. After the exchange of signatures, it was the delegates' business to return to their respective Parliaments and obtain their approval. Mr. Lloyd George was fortunate enough having his elections behind him to meet with no opposition. M. Clemenceau, whom his enemies sought to overthrow by means of the Treaty before the general elections of November, 1919, had to fight for more than two months in the Chamber finally to obtain the imposing majority of 372 votes against 53; on the other hand it took him but two days to secure the unanimous approval of the Senate. Mr. Wilson met with a harder fate, singularly aggravated by his illness which for more than six months isolated him physically and intellectually from his country and the rest of the world. A campaign lacking strong opposition succeeded in wrecking the work of unity he had accomplished in Paris.

France from the point of view of her own interests, which no one can reproach her for holding dear, deplored this and deplores it still, but it was not in her power to prevent it. All she could do was to take precautions and guarantees against this risk which had been present from the very first in the minds of her negotiators. This she did by obtaining the addition of the final paragraph to Article 429 on the importance of which I have laid such stress. The future rests with the Government of the United States, and with it alone, in the exercise of its national sovereignty. We know what we wish may be the

Digitized by Google

outcome for the sake of the peace of the world in which France more than anyone else is interested. But in case the hoped-for assistance fails us, we shall have to remain on the Rhine and, in the absence of undertakings now pending as by virtue of the Treaty of Versailles for the common good of all, mount guard for Liberty.

II

If the policy of union with the Anglo-Saxon peoples was for France—as indeed it was for them—a labour of love, of experience and of foresight, there was for my country yet another labour, which experience commanded us to prepare equally with love and foresight: a union with Belgium! Like brothers both in danger and in misfortune, our two countries might have found in a more active pre-war policy some measure of protection. Had they been better informed of Germany, less trustful, more confiding in each other, they might perhaps have held the German onslaught at the start; won on the Meuse the Victory of the Marne; and if not by their own unaided efforts have decided the outcome of the war, at least saved from invasion and from ruin millions of acres of their soil.

From the beginning of the Conference, M. Clemenceau attached peculiar importance to the realization of this union. I shall advance but one proof. In our reply of March 17,* to the offer of the English and American Treaties, we ended our statement of the clauses which we considered essential with the following sentence which expressed the indissoluble unity of French and Belgian interests:

> It goes without saying that by act of aggression against France the French Government understands also any aggression against Belgium.

Briefly in the mind of the French Government the destiny of France and that of Belgium were inseparable.

(1) See Chapter V, page 182.

Digitized by Google

Our aim was to associate them practically. But to realize this association two preliminary conditions had to be met; first that a general plan of security in which Belgium should form an integral part be drawn up; second, that satisfaction in accord with France, be given to the Belgian demands by the Conference. M. Clemenceau's Government worked hard, until its retirement, to obtain these two results. When he relinquished power, both had been achieved and the way was open for the defensive agreement signed in August, 1920, between the Governments of France and Belgium.

It was necessary, in order to build up the future, to first clear away all vestiges of a dead past and for that purpose to obliterate the Treaties of 1839—the burdensome and unavailing charter of a violated neutrality. By the revision of these Treaties, moreover, Belgium summarized her various demands. The unswerving support of France was given her for the breaking of this obsolete encumbrance. On February 12, 1919, the Supreme Council appointed the Commission for Belgian Affairs of which I was chairman and in accord with my colleagues I immediately asked for explicit authority to present general proposals concerning the revision and its consequences. Why? Because knowing the hesitation of some in regard to stipulations which necessarily affected a neutral country—Holland—I wished, before entering into any discussion of details, to assert and justify the essential principle of the free existence of a victorious Belgium. On February 25, I said to the Supreme Council:

"There is only one question. It is this, Belgium lived wholly and entirely under the Treaties of 1839. The war has destroyed these Treaties, and Belgium demands that they be revised.

"The signatory Powers which fought together in the war are in agreement. President Wilson, in one of his fourteen points, expressed the opinion that the neutrality of Belgium ought to disappear.

"The Treaties of 1839 are signed not only by Belgium

Digitized by Google

and Holland, but by the Guaranteeing Powers two of which are here represented. It results therefore that, so long as the Great Powers have not officially declared that new negotiations should be begun with a view to establishing a new régime in place of the Treaties of 1839, we shall continually encounter the difficulties already noted."

The delegates of the Powers were of this opinion and the next day the Commission set to work on the basis of my proposals. Five days later the report was unanimously adopted and transmitted to the Supreme Council. On the points of law we recalled first that the three Treaties of 1839—between Belgium and Holland and the Five Great Powers—by virtue of their stipulations formed an indivisible whole. Three of the guarantors had violated their undertakings—Prussia and Austria in 1914, Russia by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk—while two of them—France and Great Britain—have honoured their signature. The sixth Power among the signatories—Holland—had declared its neutrality. Without discussing either the question of the manner in which this neutrality had been observed, or that of the nullity in law of these Treaties by reason of the non-execution of their fundamental clause, the Commission reported in favour of revision on the grounds that Belgium, France, Great Britain and the United States had declared it necessary and that furthermore it was the logical outcome of the events of the past seventy years.

Following the same line the Commission showed the Treaty of 1839 originally negotiated not on behalf of Belgium but against her by the authors of the Treaty of 1815; all the Belgian claims of 1839 concerning the freedom of the Scheldt, Limburg and Luxemburg ruthlessly rejected by the future guarantors; Belgium, eight years later declaring on the eve of the signature that "she was yielding to the imperious law of necessity." Our report established that these Treaties born of a so-called "higher interest"—foreign in any case to Belgium and to Holland—had, in no degree and at no time, expressed the self-determination of the two principal countries involved; and

Digitized by Google

that moreover if they had imposed on Belgium undisputed and onerous servitudes, they had not in the hour of danger given her the promised security. Much to the contrary, the régime of the Scheldt had prevented sending supplies to Antwerp. Luxemburg had served as an offensive base for Germany. It had not been possible to hold the Meuse properly. Dutch Limburg had at the time of the Armistice given passage to German troops.

The Commission reported therefore, *de jure et de facto,* in favour of revision:

(1) The Treaties of 1839 should be revised in the totality of their clauses on the joint demands of the Powers which consider this revision necessary.

(2) Holland should take part in this revision.

(3) Those among the great guaranteeing Powers which have held their engagement, should also take part in it.

(4) The Great Powers which have general interests represented at the Peace Conference should also take part in it.

(5) The general aim of this revision is (in accordance with the purpose of the League of Nations) to liberate Belgium from the limitations of sovereignty imposed upon her by the Treaty of 1839, and to suppress as much for her sake as for that of peace in general the various risks and inconveniences resulting from the said Treaties.

On March 8, I presented the report to the Supreme Council which on the same day unanimously adopted its conclusions. The Treaty handed to Germany, on May 8, consequently stipulated that the latter, recognizing that the Treaties of 1839 no longer met the circumstances, accepted their abrogation and undertook to conform to all the conventions destined to replace them, between Belgium and the Powers.

There remained Holland. Some of our great Allies would have preferred—and they made no secret of it—that the negotiation be carried on directly between that country and Belgium. On the strength of the decision of March 8, I obtained on June 4, consent from the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, after long discussion, that

Digitized by Google

the Great Powers should take part in the negotiations along with Belgium and Holland. The first meeting was held on July 29, 1919, the last on March 23, 1920. This agreement reached so laboriously was halted again, at the last moment by the unjustified claims of Holland to the Wielingen Channels which she herself during the war had recognized as not belonging to her territorial waters. In any case the revision of the Treaties of 1839 and its main consequence, the abrogation of Belgian neutrality, are no longer opposed by anyone. Thus liberated Belgium acquires the right of providing for her own safety. It is the birthright of the Belgian Army of 600,000 which to-morrow will be joined in brotherly union with our own for the defense of peace. France, by the part she played in the negotiations, may justly claim an honourable sponsorship.

On principle the case was won. But practically as regards the consequences, or at least some of them, Belgium was less fortunate. Here two distinct but contradictory currents manifested themselves in the Belgian Government, in which all parties were represented. The Socialists said: "No annexation." The bourgeois parties inclined to believe that to guarantee to Belgium full military and economic security (use of the Scheldt, canal from Ghent to Tervueren, canal from Antwerp to the Meuse) the simplest solution would be to place the left bank of the Scheldt and Dutch Limburg under Belgian sovereignty. It is superfluous to add that this transfer was justified not only on historical ground but by excellent arguments of national security confirmed by more than four years of war. In spite of this, the Belgian case was put forward with hesitation. Premises were presented and no conclusions drawn. Belgium did suggest, however, that in the event of satisfaction being given her Holland might receive compensation either on the banks of the Ems, or in Guelders—a Prussian district inhabited by a people of Dutch origin and tradition.

The Commission for Belgian Affairs, after a minute discussion, admitted the principle of this solution which

Digitized by Google

seemed to be a just and necessary guarantee of Belgian security; but it very soon appeared that such a solution—obviously delicate, as it implied cession of territory by Germany to a neutral power—would meet with objections. As early as February 11, Mr. Wilson had said:

"I do not see how Holland can be brought to discuss this question of sovereignty."

On March 31, he added:

"You ask Germany to yield German territory to a neutral country. That may be just, but it is difficult to justify."

April 4, the King of the Belgians insisted in his usual clear and straightforward fashion and expressed astonishment at the objections presented by the British Admiralty with regard to the left bank of the Scheldt. Mr. Lloyd George replied to him:

"If you wish to modify the régime of the Scheldt, we are ready. If however territorial questions are concerned, it is another matter."

On April 16, I was summoned, as President of the Commission for Belgian Affairs, to defend the report of this Commission before the Council of Four. Mr. Hymans was present. We both insisted upon the character of the proposal, it was—neither more nor less—to render possible a future Dutch and Belgian agreement, which could hardly be arranged without some medium of exchange. We asked to have a door left open *and we expressly reserved the rights of the population by a plebiscite.* We had the conviction that our suggestion was just and we defended it with force. In vain. All cession of Dutch territory to Belgium, and of German territory to Holland was rejected by the Council.

Henceforth, Belgium's territorial claims were limited to the two Walloon districts of Eupen and Malmedy and to the territory of Moresnet. Ten meetings of the Commission finally led to a favourable solution which events have since justified; for out of a population of 55,000 inhabitants only 266 protests were made within the time fixed by the

Digitized by Google

Treaty. This was for Belgium, a very meagre extension of territory. The increases that were refused would have been of real importance to her. Belgium despite the weight of historical argument was defeated—as France had been in her demands for the 1814* frontier and an independent Rhineland.† But she had been able once again to test our country's active support and to understand the need of a close union between the two countries.

This union was riveted still more firmly by the result of another discussion equally vital for Belgium and for France—that of the reparations. Nothing more certain than Belgium's right in this matter. In the month of April, 1914, Herr Bethmann-Hollweg—"Necessity knows no law"—had himself recognized it. Attacked not on political grounds involving her, but as a result of her geographical situation; thrust into the struggle in violation of the Treaties of 1839 and of the Hague Convention of 1907 —Belgium had on February 14, 1916, received from her Allies by the declaration of Ste. Adresse the solemn assurance that she would be restored and effectively aided in her recovery. January 8, 1918, President Wilson, in the seventh of his fourteen points, had declared for "the full restoration of Belgium." The bases of peace announced on November 5 following had sanctioned this declaration. Agreement as to principle was complete. But its application was to give rise to difficulties.

As soon as the Commission and Sub-Commission entrusted by the Supreme Council with the study of the problem of reparations began their work in February, 1919, the Belgian delegate, M. Van den Heuvel, made no secret of the fact that he claimed exceptional treatment for his country. Other delegates immediately opposed this claim on the ground of absolute equality for all, and the desirability—which was unquestioned—of general solutions. I had met the same objections when as President of the Commission formed to draft the clauses relative to

*See Chapter VIII.
†See Chapter V.

Digitized by Google

Alsace and Lorraine* I was obliged to fight through long sessions to obtain departures from the general principles of the Treaty no matter how justified in equity. Such was the Belgian situation in February. Neither Belgium nor France obtained all she asked. But we did get the essential.

M. Van den Heuvel's plea was a strong one. In order to avoid a total of more than a thousand billions which clearly could never be recovered, the Allies did not demand from Germany the reimbursement of their war expenditures. Belgium, contractually neutral and victim of a double violation of international law, asked that an exception be made to this rule and Germany be forced to pay all her war and Government expenditures which the loans of the Allies had enabled her to meet. Germany was compelled to pay the Allies pensions and separation allowances in addition to reparations for damage to property. Belgium asked that it be remembered that invaded at the very start of the war she had not been able to raise a large Army and that therefore her share of payments on account of pensions would be very small. Finally under the two heads settled upon by the Allies, Reparations and Pensions, Germany would have to pay hundreds of billions; Belgium urged that as her share would be only a small one, she would in the ordinary course of pro-rata distribution be obliged to wait too long for monies of which she stood in urgent need. For all these reasons, Belgium demanded privileged treatment and priority, the exact terms and amounts to be settled later. This demand was formulated in a Note of March 29 which ended as follows:

> Belgium does not overlook the demands for reparations that may be presented by other Powers; but she thinks she may legitimately claim that her special position should be taken into account and her recovery facilitated.
>
> Owing to the *de jure et de facto* position in which it is placed, the Royal Government demands priority for Belgian claims, and solicits the aid of the Allied and Associated Governments to obtain

*See Chapter VII.

Digitized by Google

such privilege for Belgium in the division of the indemnities paid by Germany, so that the reparation to which she is entitled may be completely and rapidly realized.

The opposition of Great Britain's representatives on the Commission, which had been apparent from the very beginning of the discussions, continued during the months of March and April. King Albert, at the meeting on April 4, was unable to overcome it. The British delegates answered that Belgium's losses were less than those of other countries, and that thousands of soldiers come from afar had died to give her back her land. Broad promises had been made at the time of the Armistice with regard to German payments; and it would not do for any Parliament to be able to say that Belgium alone had benefited from them. The resistance was unyielding, and M. Loucheur, in the Committee of five members appointed to deal with the financial questions, could not break it. Equality for all; such was the principle adhered to.

Belgium then made a supreme effort. On April 24 in two Notes handed to the plenipotentaries, M. Hymans summarized his country's demand. He no longer claimed full priority, but only a privileged payment of 2,500 millions. He asked in addition for the reimbursement of food relief expenses, war expenses, and expenses of administration while the Belgian Government was at Havre and also the reimbursement of communal relief loans, the interprovincial loan raised to pay off penalties inflicted by the Germans; and of loss sustained by the Government on marks repurchased at 1 fr. 25 from Belgian citizens. April 29, M. Hymans, accompanied by M. Van den Heuvel and M. Vandervelde, appeared before the Council of Four. It was a thrilling and tragic meeting, in which the three Belgian Ministers pleaded with their hearts and their heads, a confused meeting in which the Great Powers tried in every way to persuade Belgium to keep calm and be moderate—a tumultuous meeting also for at certain moments one wondered whether Belgium would not break away.

Digitized by Google

"Think of our people," said M. Vandervelde, "a little people but one that trusts you. Do not refuse what it expects and what it has a perfect right to."

"You have fewer dead than we," answered Mr. Lloyd George.

"Look at France," said M. Clemenceau, "I have not always been satisfied with the solutions that I have been obliged to accept. Our Parliaments all believe that we do not obtain enough. I do my duty and that is enough for me. I give way sometimes to solutions which I feel to be imperfect and even unjust. I do so in the interest of higher unity. You think that you have not been given enough. I do not say no. You ask our aid? I do not say no. But there are general rules against you, rules the strength of which lie in the very fact that they are general, equal for all. Do not be uncompromising and rest assured that you will never find us indifferent to your difficulties."

And France, by the side of Belgium—France unjustly attacked and who in order to facilitate the practical accord of the Allies did not claim the recovery of her own war expenses—France, through a new effort of her financial experts, principally due to M. Loucheur, succeeded, by dint of patience and firmness, in finding a solution which, although incomplete, gave Belgium essential advantages. She was not reimbursed, any more than France was, for her losses in marks; because such a course would have plunged us into an abyss of unlimited claims, on the part of Bohemia, Poland and Roumania. On the other hand, the reimbursement of all the loans contracted by Belgium up to the Armistice was charged against Germany, and Belgium was liberated by the Treaty itself from her debt to the Allies. In addition, a priority of 2,500 millions was granted to her on the first German payments to rank immediately after the expenses of occupation.

Four months later, M. Clemenceau declared in the Senate:

As far as priority is concerned, I have done something which may be said to be imprudent. We have not obtained priority for

Digitized by Google

our own reparations...and yet, at a critical moment, Belgium having great need of us, I pleaded for her and obtained for her a priority payment of two and one-half billions. I was unable to get this priority for France, but I got it for another country. I repeat it was perhaps imprudent, but I could not permit that Belgium should be left in the situation you know of with the consent of France. (*Applause.*)

Several Senators. You were right.

From beginning to end of the financial discussion, without restriction or reserve but with practical foresight, France had lent Belgium her active, her full support. Honour commanded it. The result has justified it.

There remained a last question, more delicate than the others—that of Luxemburg. More delicate for it might easily, if caution were not exercised, lead to at least an apparent conflict between French and Belgian interests. On February 11, 1919, M. Hymans, with the unanimous support of Belgian opinion, had declared that his country, repudiating all policy of annexation, counted nevertheless upon the Powers to aid in establishing closer relations between Belgium and the Grand Duchy—relations justified by historic memories and considerations of security. In Luxemburg, on the other hand, many who desired to change the pre-war system were attracted politically and economically towards France rather than towards Belgium. Their appeal was heard in Paris and many of our countrymen, especially in Parliament, urged the blood shed in our cause by so many Luxemburgers as an argument to oppose Belgian claims. They demanded that Luxemburg should be permitted to choose freely, and that France should hearken to a call the tenour of which none of them doubted.

The French Government, even before the signing of the Armistice, had felt these two contradictory currents. M. Aristide Briand in his confidential Memorandum to the French Ambassadors of February, 1917, on the war aims, had avoided any definite reference to the solution of the Luxemburg problem. Five months later however on June 9, 1917, M. Ribot, then Premier, had declared to Baron de

Digitized by Google

Gaiffier, the Belgian Minister, that the annexation of Luxemburg was not one of France's war aims and had formally authorized King Albert's representative to make official use of this declaration. At the opening of the Peace Conference, French policy had no other legal basis than this negative affirmation. Is it necessary to add that however lively our sympathies for the people of Luxemburg surrendered by its dynasty to Germany in 1914 but now steadfast in its desire for liberations, the will to give Belgium a proof of our friendship was uppermost in all minds?

During the negotiations of 1919, M. Clemenceau, in spite of pressure brought to bear upon him in varying directions, treated these difficult problems in the only right way, with complete loyalty and entire frankness. From the first day, he told Belgium what he would and what he could do. From the first day also he made clear the one thing he could not do. Confirming without restriction M. Ribot's promise he declared:

"France has in Luxemburg no design of annexation either open or disguised."

Going even further, he added:

"France will welcome any agreement between Belgium and Luxemburg. Not only will she rejoice at it, but she will aid it by every means in her power."

The only restriction—and who could fail to understand it—was the following:

"Settle your own affair with Luxemburg. But do not ask me to repel—by an official act—affections that turn towards France, or to impose the Belgian solution—a solution which, in my opinion, should come from a free understanding and form another link between our three countries."

Ever unchanging M. Clemenceau, to the day of his retirement, proved to Belgium by his acts the sincerity of his declaration. In the question of the recognition of the Luxemburg Government he constantly refused to take any initiative and declared his intention of leaving to Belgium the privilege of priority. On March 5 in response to the

Digitized by Google

wish of the Belgians he intervened to adjourn the hearing of the Luxemburg delegation by the Supreme Council. At the same period incidents having arisen in Luxemburg the responsibility for which Belgium laid to a French general, this general was relieved of his command. It was M. Clemenceau who in order to leave Belgium full liberty of action and negotiation, supported on two occasions the adjournment of the political plebiscite and the economic referendum. Finally when on May 28, M. Reuter, Minister of the State of Luxemburg, was heard by the Council of Four, these were the terms in which the head of the French Government summed up the situation:

"We are, and we wish to be, your friends. We also want to be on the best terms with the Belgian people, who threw themselves into the battle with a heroism that we can never forget, and which lays us under great obligations to them. As the political situation in Luxemburg did not appear to us to be very clear we have preferred to ask you to adjourn your plebiscite and your referendum. I am glad we waited. The potential difficulties and misunderstandings are now in fair way to be settled.

"Your object is to bring France, Belgium and Luxemburg closer together. Belgium has already begun these conversations. We are ready to join you in them, if you both desire it. I do not want to force myself upon you. If you desire our participation in your conversation, we shall be glad to add thereto our friendship."

It was in these conditions, and in this atmosphere that a Committee over which I presided and on which Baron de Gaiffier represented Belgium prepared Articles 40 and 41 relative to Luxemburg. Germany, under these articles, renounced the advantages accruing to her from all provisions in the Treaties and conventions that had been concluded between herself and the Grand Duchy from 1842 to 1902. Luxemburg was to withdraw from the German Zollverein. Germany was to renounce all her rights in the operation of the railways, and to adhere in advance, to all arrangements relative to the Grand Duchy that might be

Digitized by Google

arrived at by the Powers. Moreover, according to Annex 5, Chapter 8, she undertook to deliver to Luxemburg an annual quantity of coal equal to that which the latter bought in Germany before the war. Thus was finally achieved emancipation from the tutelage imposed by Prussia. Full liberty was in addition guaranteed to the Allies for the negotiation of further agreements.

At the end of 1919, the situation was favourable to the definite conclusion of such agreements. At the meeting of the Supreme Council, November 13, M. Clemenceau said:

"At present there is no difficulty between France and Belgium with regard to the question of Luxemburg as a whole. The only point at issue relates to a railroad which Bismarck took from us in 1871. This technical difficulty is, moreover, in a fair way to be settled."*

Thus by his unwavering fairness the head of the French Government had succeeded in negotiating without a hitch a question which through no fault of Belgium's or of our own, might at times, by the very force of circumstances, have provoked friction. The road was clear for a complete and general agreement between our neighbors and ourselves. Before long this was to be officially consummated.

On January 6, 1920, as a result of technical negotiations between two members of the French and Belgian Governments, M. Loucheur and M. Jaspar, it was recognized that a general conversation was necessary and possible, notably with regard to the military agreement of which the French representatives in 1919, had occasion to speak either with the King of the Belgians or his Ministers. On January 8, M. Clemenceau called upon Marshal Foch to take up the question and prepare a plan. On January 18 the Clemenceau Cabinet resigned.

The negotiation thus begun—the consequence and the

*Article 67 of the Treaty of Versailles, substituting the French Government in all the rights of the German Empire over all the railway lines managed by the Empire Railroad Administration, had placed in the hands of France, the Luxemburg system which had, moreover been operated before 1870 by the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer de l'Est. It was on this point that Belgium has asked for an amendment.

Digitized by Google

consecration of a year of brotherhood in peace after four years of brotherhood of arms—was carried to a successful conclusion by the Millerand Cabinet. Such an agreement answers so clearly to the interests and feelings of the two nations that it needs no comment. It is the contractual expression of the nature of things and the instincts of nations. France and Belgium, to whom the war has taught so much, had on the way to peace met the same obstacles. Great and loyal Allies without whose aid their very existence would have been compromised did not always understand certain of their claims. Who was wrong? Who was right? The future will tell. In any case the policy followed since November 11, 1918, has tightened bonds forged in anguish—that is the main thing! Two nations, brave and honest, standing shoulder to shoulder to uphold their rights and make Europe safe, can look to the future with confidence. In the future as in the past, in the future even more than in the past, in peace or in war—if ever Germany should resort to war again—Frenchmen and Belgians will hold for the welfare of mankind as much as for that of their respective lands.

Need I insist—after the foregoing—upon the character of these three Treaties—the first two still pending, the third in force? Whoever may have doubts as to their scope or origin will find an answer in the ruined cities and the devastated regions of Belgium and of France. They are like the Treaty of Versailles itself, the work of men who are determined that it shall never recur. Menace? No. Protection? Yes. Neither Belgium nor France can, to save the liberty of the world, inflict upon themselves every few decades the sufferings they underwent for five years. They are determined that in the future the door shall be closed and the bolt made strong. Moreover these three defensive Treaties are within the scope and beneath the control of the League of Nations. They are secret neither in their origin nor in their clauses. They appear as—what they indeed are—the living lesson of history—the seed of a prosperous future. They are also—and I

Digitized by Google

hope that Great Britain and America will see it—an essential factor of that Peace of Justice and of Right which France, in complete accord with her Allies, wanted and has achieved.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

ALSACE AND LORRAINE

WHAT Alsace and Lorraine were to France, the whole world knew on that day when the two provinces acclaimed the triumphant entry of our troops. Their loyalty was of long standing. As far back as the eighteenth century Prussians acknowledged it. Read what at the time of the Congress of Utrecht, their Government wrote to its plenipotentiaries:

> It is notorious that the inhabitants of Alsace are more French than the Parisians and that the King of France is so sure of their attachment to his service and his glory that he commands them to provide themselves with swords, guns, halberds, pistols, powder and shot, whenever there is rumour that the Germans purpose crossing the Rhine, and that they rush in a body to the banks of that river to prevent or at any rate to oppose the passage of the Germanic nations at the evident risk of their own lives, as though they were marching to victory....
>
> Were the Alsatians to be separated from the King of France whom they adore, he could not be deprived of their hearts except by two hundred years of bondage.

Bismarck knew this and what the result would be. After brief hesitation, he nevertheless yielded to Moltke's demands and to the theory of the military frontier. He attempted neither to deny nor to excuse the outrage perpetrated against the rights and the will of a people. Just as Bethmann-Hollweg was to appear in the Reichstag forty-three years later, so Bismarck was in the same place on May 2, 1871. Proclaiming "the repugnance of the inhabitants for their separation from France," he asserted his

Digitized by Google

intention of taking no account of this. The representatives of Alsace and Lorraine had just launched from Bordeaux their heartrending appeal for justice.* No one answered. The "Land of Empire" was necessary to the new-born Empire not only as a bulwark, but as cement. It became, under the absolute authority of the Emperor, King of Prussia, the common property of the German States. It was the first Imperial conquest, the first sign of Empire. But historically in a century of national aspirations, the annexation was a monstrous solecism. By it German victory assumed against France a meaning and an importance it had not had against Austria. For an indefinite future the relations between France and Germany were encumbered by a lien which precluded harmony or healthy exchanges. The peace of the whole world, to use President Wilson's words, "was greatly disturbed thereby."

From 1871 to 1914, the drama of two million men defending their national soul against a powerful Empire went on. In Alsace-Lorraine, in France and abroad, 536,000 Alsatians and Lorrainers declared for France. Those who remained at home did not give way. With ruthless severity Germanization fell upon both provinces. In Government as in education, everything that recalled the past was

*"The representatives of Alsace and Lorraine, prior to any negotiations for peace, have laid on the table of the National Assembly a declaration most solemnly stating, in the name of both Provinces, their wish and right to remain French.

"Having been handed over, contrary to all justice, and through an odious abuse of power, to the domination of the foreigner, we have one last duty to perform.

"We once again declare to be null and void a treaty which disposes of us without our consent.

"The revindication of our rights remains forever open to each and all, according to the dictates of our conscience.

"On leaving these precincts, where our dignity will not allow us to remain any longer, and despite the bitterness of our sorrow, the supreme thought, which lies at the bottom of our hearts, is one of gratitude to those who, for the last six months, have unceasingly defended us, as also of unalterable attachment to the Mother country from which we have been so violently torn.

"We shall still be with you in our prayers, and shall wait, with full confidence in the future, for regenerated France to resume the course of her great destiny.

"Your brothers of Alsace and Lorraine, albeit separated for the time being from the common family, will retain for France, absent though she be from their homes, a filial affection until the day when she returns to take again her place therein."

Digitized by Google

abolished and forbidden. Men came and went. Manteuffel, the two Hohenlohe, Wedel. The principle remained and never varied even when domination made pretense of indulgence. But the spirit of protest never abated even when the exigencies of life suggested accommodation. I will refrain from writing here the history of this long martyrdom: independent newspapers suppressed; the French language forbidden; the right of association denied; police pressure unloosed; political trials multiplied; individual relations hampered by passport regulations; the "peace of the grave" organized by the victors under the notorious "paragraph concerning dictatorship." Separated from France, refractory to Germany, Alsace and Lorraine sought refuge in their own genius; here too after a few months, everything this effort had created—museums, theatres, magazines, sporting clubs or literary societies—fell under the iron hand of unbending authority.

In 1902, the law establishing the dictatorship was repealed; in 1911, a new Constitution was promulgated but neither real liberty nor legal autonomy resulted for Alsace-Lorraine. "We have been swindled," wrote the Abbé Wetterlé. A few isolated Germans understood the cleavage which Prussian officialism was every day widening between conquerors and conquered. Never did the Imperial Government abandon oppression of those it felt unable to convince. Its active and often beneficial administration was unable to offset the initial error and its consequences. Years pass and antagonism grows more bitter. In 1909 authoritarianism turned to persecution. Every day brought a lawsuit. Every verdict a renewal of protest which expressed itself in a thousand ingenius ways that irritated and exasperated the dull-witted Germans. Expulsions increase daily as do imprisonments. Suspects are hunted down and then came the Saverne incident when a colonel, setting law at naught, charges people in the streets and arrests magistrates in their homes, for the glory of an Army which he alleges has been insulted: a striking epitome —not only for the people of Alsace and Lorraine, but also

Digitized by Google

for Germany and the whole world—of the relentless struggle between a tortured race and a government of oppression. Thereafter, the "Land of Empire" is openly treated as enemy country. Spies lurked in every home. Germans no longer even try to dissimulate, they think only of crushing and of uprooting.

The war breaks out and the Imperial Government which up till 1918 is to repeat that "there was no Alsace-Lorraine question," the Imperial Government which by the mouth of Count Hertling is to aver that "Alsace-Lorraine is bound to Germanism by bonds that grow daily stronger"—the Imperial Government, I repeat, inflicts upon the downtrodden provinces an iron-clad régime the like of which history has never known. For the civilian population, Alsatians are forbidden, under pain of imprisonment, to post their letters in boxes other than those of their own districts. On January 5, 1917, 4,000 inhabitants of Mulhouse, between seventeen and sixty, are assembled in the barracks and deported to the interior of Germany. An old man in Strassburg, who took off his hat to French prisoners in the street, is sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment. To facilitate arbitrary repression, newspapers were forbidden to publish reports of courts-martial. An Alsatian nun for protesting against the destruction of the Cathedral at Reims is sent to prison for six months. Another, at Riedisheim, for treating the French wounded too kindly, is sentenced to five years' hard labour. A Swiss has computed the sentences passed in three years by German courts-martial upon natives of Alsace and Lorraine; the total exceeds 5,000 years' imprisonment. A label in French on any package brought fine or even imprisonment to the sender. Two women speak French in a tramcar: fourteen days' imprisonment. The mayor of a commune speaks in French to one of his fellow townsmen: three months in prison. Of course as soon as war began all newspapers printed in French were suppressed. The governor of Alsace-Lorraine summed up the situation in 1915 in a proclamation which brands the inhabitants as traitors,

Digitized by Google

14,000 of them having, at the risk of their lives joined the French Army in August, 1914.

Meanwhile, Alsatian recruits already conscripted when the war began, serve in the Germany Army. They are subjected to savage persecution. A general order prescribed special treatment for all soldiers, natives of Alsace or Lorraine: more stringent postal censorship: no leave: police supervision and corporal punishment. An Alsatian soldier complains of having had nothing to eat: his lieutenant and adjutant horsewhip him till he faints beneath their blows. Another officer instructs his sergeants to "break in well the Alsatians and Lorrainers who are all bandits and traitors." It is ordered that they be stationed in the most dangerous places and everywhere regarded as suspects. In the course of the battles of 1918, we captured on prisoners several hundred such orders. Among them I will quote two: one in which it is laid down that German troops, quartered in Alsace-Lorraine, are to conduct themselves "as in enemy country"; the other, issued by General Loewenfeld, commanding the Prussian Guard, where one may read: "The Lorrainers do not belong to our race." Herr von Kuhlmann said in December, 1917: "There is no Alsace-Lorraine question." To this piece of ministerial impudence fit answer was given throughout the war by the acts of German civil and military authorities. Besides, was it not a deputy for Saxony, the Socialist Wendel, who declared to the Reichstag on June 7, 1918: "If a vote of the people of Alsace-Lorraine were taken to-day, four-fifths —that is to say, the whole, minus the German immigrants— would vote in favour of France."

II

In France all parties without distinction, in peace as in war, have lived the martyrdom of Alsace-Lorraine. "Think of them always," said Gambetta. And, twenty years later, Jaurès answered this appeal: "Alsace and Lorraine are like two trees which may be separated from the forest by

Digitized by Google

a wall but whose far-reaching roots extend beneath the enclosure and rejoin the roots of the main forest." The French did not declare a war of revenge. But when the conqueror of 1870 renewed his criminal aggression, the recovery of the two provinces became, with the defense of French soil, the instinctive war object of the nation. On that point neither hesitation nor doubt. Full recovery, pure and simple, was a natural right.

By no means all the Allied Governments and people had during the war an equally clear understanding of the manifest justice of our claim. Take Great Britain, for example. Up to the last moment, the more advanced Liberals accepted the idea of the return of Alsace and Lorraine to France only under express reservations. The least unreasonable demand a plebiscite which the conscience of France rejects as an outrage against truth and a challenge to justice. Others (read the articles published in the *Nation*, *Manchester Guardian* and *Labour Leader*)—go further still and demand that, when peace is declared, "both the annexed provinces, by universal and solemn Treaty, be placed under the guardianship of all the belligerent Powers, America included." An influential pacifist, M. Snowden, writes at the same time (end of 1917) that "if, in the question of Alsace-Lorraine, the Allies persist in their present attitude, the war will not be finished either in 1917 or in 1918." On January 18, 1918, a delegate of the Trades Unions, received by the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George, asks him this question which reveals both suspicion and lack of understanding:

"Is it the people of France or the people of Alsace-Lorraine who complain of the latter's present situation?"

Mr. Lloyd George himself hesitated long before he asserted the conviction which will for ever honour his speech of January 5, 1918: "The question of Alsace-Lorraine is a sore, which, for the last half century, has infected the peace of Europe. Normal conditions cannot be re-established before it is cured.... We mean to support the French Democracy to the death, when it calls for a

Digitized by Google

revision of the great iniquity perpetrated in 1871." Six months earlier, on July 14, 1917, he had not thought the question sufficiently clear in the minds of his fellow countrymen to warrant his being present at the banquet to which the Alsatians and Lorrainers in England had invited him. Up to the very end of the war, the special case—unique and clear—presented by the Alsace-Lorraine question, was persistently misunderstood by a portion of British public opinion.

In America the same misunderstanding prevailed to an even greater extent. On my arrival in Washington on May 15, 1917, as High Commissioner of the French Republic, I at once noticed that, however sincere the affection of America for France, the question of Alsace-Lorraine was misunderstood by the majority. For most Americans, Alsace was a German-speaking country. That settled everything. They were ignorant both of the facts and the feelings, as well as of the incomparable example of moral loyalty displayed for nearly fifty years by these people, hard and staunch as granite. They hesitated to take the word of Alsatians in America who, when speaking of the sufferings and the hopes of their native land, did so with an accent which though foreign, was not French. Moreover, every country in Europe—not without abuses of analogy—professed to have its own Alsace-Lorraine. Italians, Serbians, Greeks, Roumanians, Poles, to justify certain pretentions warranted in principle but very different in historical evolution from the case of Alsace-Lorraine, never tired of evoking Metz and Strassburg; and this generalization alarmed timid minds which regarded all territorial claims as germs of war. How often Americans have expressed to me the hope that France would be content with an independent and neutral Alsace-Lorraine! How many expressed surprise when, to the statement of our rights, I added that their obvious justice made a plebiscite useless and unacceptable. I remember a long discussion I had in August, 1917, with Mr. Walter Lippmann, a member of the *Inquiry Office,* the official bureau established for

Digitized by Google

the advance study of peace questions: the idea of a plebiscite was so deeply rooted in his mind—the idea of Alsace and Lorraine forming an integral part of France was so perfectly foreign to him—that he had concocted a system of voting by fragments under which the two provinces would be divided into a dozen sections. Two hours of explanation were needed to dissuade him from a scheme at which the Alsatians and Lorrainers would have been the first dismayed could they have known of it.

A few months later this state of opinion was entirely changed. I venture to believe that the activities of my co-workers and of myself, the 15,000 lectures in English where young officers, with all the authority of their war record and of their wounds, presented the pitiful situation of the captive provinces, had something to do with this transformation. On May 10, 1918, in introducing in New York at an impressive ceremony, a company of *chasseurs à pied,* which I had asked M. Clemenceau to place at my disposal for the third Liberty Loan campaign, I described the convict system enforced in Alsace-Lorraine and added: "If, as alleged by Kuhlmann and Scheidemann, there is no Alsace-Lorraine question; if, as Hertling avers, Alsace and Lorraine are bound to Germanism by ever tightening bonds, then I ask why Germany has for the last four years, been treating Alsace-Lorraine as a conquered country; I ask why the regulations which she applied to those provinces are even more savage than those to which Belgium and Northern France have been subjected." I was answered by tremendous cheers. At my side, stood M. Daniel Blumenthal, former mayor of Colmar, who, by the reorganization under his presidency of the Associations of Alsatians and Lorrainers in America, had afforded me the most valuable assistance. Thousands of huge posters, reproducing Henner's *"Alsacienne,"* with the text of the Bordeaux protest referred to above, had carried the meaning and scope of our claim to every state of the Union. Support came from all sides. The battle was won.

In this success which does honour to the heart of

Digitized by Google

America, Americans themselves, particularly university men, worked with us. French gratitude must assign a place apart to the eminent university man who presided over the destinies of the United States. On January 8, 1918, at 11 o'clock in the morning, a gentleman connected with the White House telephoned me: "The President is to read a message to Congress at noon. Come. You will be pleased." An hour later, I heard President Wilson, before the Senate and House, which stood to cheer him, utter the famous words: "The wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871, in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years,—should be righted in order that peace may once more be made secure in the interest of all."

Of all the public declarations of our Allies upon this essential matter this was the clearest and most comprehensive. The President formulated the axiom of pure and simple reparation of an international outrage. It excluded at the same time the insultingly illegitimate solutions of neutrality and of a plebiscite. Lastly, it gave to the problem of Alsace-Lorraine its full significance not only from a French but from a human standpoint; its true symbolic value of a triumph of justice and liberty. A few days later, replying to the President of the Association of Alsatians and Lorrainers, Mr. Wilson telegraphed his hope that "the year 1918 would see the realization of the deferred hopes of Alsace-Lorraine." And as, owing to controversies in the Press, M. Pichon, Minister for Foreign Affairs, wished to have from the President himself a definite interpretation of his words, Mr. Wilson answered, smiling:

"I think I have spoken clearly. To right a wrong means only one thing—to put things back in the state where they were before the wrong was done. Alsace and Lorraine must be placed purely and simply in the situation they were in before the Treaty of Frankfort."

A Frenchman would not have spoken otherwise. Moreover, the President's conviction was of long standing.

"When I was a boy," he told me one day, "I could never

Digitized by Google

think of Alsace-Lorraine without sorrow. For half a century, they had the unique privilege of representing violated justice in the eyes of the entire universe. In the world's history, there is no parallel of their case."

From the beginning to the end of the Peace Conference, President Wilson was for all our Alsace-Lorraine proposals, a staunch and active friend. Just as by his supreme authority, he had welded the public opinion in his country on the principle of the case, so, in its application, he loyally helped us in securing the necessary guarantees. I wish here to express to him my deep gratitude.

On July 14, 1918, at Mount Vernon, on the annual pilgrimage to Washington's tomb, each of the races represented in the American people sent delegates to speak in their name. When the turn came for Americans of French origin, it was an Alsatian who stepped forward and, on the verdant slopes which rise from the banks of the Potomac to the wooded heights above, a tremendous cheer greeted Alsace, as the spokesman of France. All America had understood.

III

Once the Conference began, our rights were never again challenged from any quarter. But when it came to its application, many difficulties arose, some of which were of a moral, others of a material order, but had the same origin.

Our Allies were willing in principle to entertain our demands. But it was their understanding that this should be subject to the same procedure and rules as applied to the other chapters of the Treaty of Peace. France on the contrary considered that the question of Alsace-Lorraine—not being like any other—should be settled in strict equity, even at the expense of precedent. We wished that by its preamble and its clauses, that portion of the Treaty relating to Alsace-Lorraine should bring out the unique character of a restitution consecrated by universal conscience as much as by the wave of joy which overwhelmed our troops

Digitized by Google

after the Armistice and which caused one of our Socialists to say: "The plebiscite is over." We wished that by reason of its unique character this restitution should be accompanied both as regards persons and property by special conditions. And when we were told that what we wanted was contrary to the general principles of the Treaty, we replied: "All the more reason." Any Frenchman, in our place, would have felt and spoken as we did. Let us not blame foreigners—even Allies—for having felt otherwise. The soul of each nation has its secret garden.

I was personally responsible for this negotiation as President of a Committee of three members, on which Mr. Charles H. Haskins represented the United States, and Mr. Headlam Morley, Great Britain. I had cause to congratulate myself upon the friendly understanding of both of my eminent colleagues. But the dozen experts, by whom each was accompanied, at times gave me great trouble. Like all my compatriots, I was inclined to think that our claims in connection with Alsace-Lorraine called for no discussion whatever and were a foregone conclusion. Ten meetings lasting four hours each, in which Mr. Keynes poured out his pro-German views, taught me that with specialists feeling forfeits its rights. Without returning to the history of this long and minute controversy, I will by a few examples show the difficulties encountered and the results obtained.

I asked first of all that the Allied Powers, and Germany with them, should recognize the moral grounds for the arrangements to be made. Some opposition shows itself: Do we propose to write a preliminary explanation for each article? I replied that no article could be compared with this, that its meaning and importance to mankind had been recognized by all the Allies. I added that it was not enough for Germany to give up what she had stolen; that she must also confess her guilt and admit the justice of the penalty. Satisfaction was given us by the following paragraph:

The High Contracting-Parties (thus including Germany) recog-

Digitized by Google

nizing the moral obligation to redress the wrong done by Germany in 1871, both to the rights of France and to the wishes of the population of Alsace and Lorraine, which were separated from their country in spite of the solemn protest of their representative at the Assembly of Bordeaux, agree upon the following articles:

In compliance with this principle, the Treaty defined the nature of the restitution, the principle of which has just been laid down. According to a wording nowhere else used in the Treaty, the two provinces were "restored to French sovereignty." They were so restored contrary to what was done for other territorial transfers, not as from the date on which the Treaty of Peace was signed, but as from the date of the Armistice concluded on November 11, 1918. Their emancipation *de facto,* in this particular case, sufficed to establish the right. The consequences were at once apparent in the section concerning nationality.

Here again the clauses demanded by the French negotiators, pursuant to the programme prepared by the authorities of Alsace-Lorraine, were prompted by the idea of reintegration and restoration. They differed on some important points from those which the Treaty of Versailles applied to cessions of territory in general. In all other cases, the right of option in favour of the ceding Nation was admitted. We rejected and caused to be set aside this procedure. In Alsace-Lorraine, there is no right of option in favour of the Germans. On the contrary, the French Government alone has the right, under the Treaty and in the exercise of its restored sovereignty, to confer the title of "Frenchmen" to true Alsatians and Lorrainers which it recognizes as such. For this it alone has power to determine the limits of reintegration *pleno jure* as well as the conditions with which Germans, who may seek naturalization, must comply. In short we have here in this matter of paramount importance an integral resurrection of our right which makes manifest by penal dispositions unlike anything else in the Treaty, the criminal character of the annexation. Other clauses, relating also to persons, are based upon the same principle: fines inflicted by Germany

Digitized by Google

to be refunded by her; judgments rendered by the civil or commercial courts, since August 3, 1914, between Alsatians and Lorrainers and Germans not to be executory until confirmed,—sentences for political offenses or misdemeanours after the same date to be quashed. All this was only just in view of the special situation of Alsace-Lorraine, but to obtain this justice in derogation of the ordinary rules entailed several days' effort.

After questions affecting persons came questions relating to interests. Here the difficulty took shape; for we were claiming exemptions refused to others in clauses, the effects of which would amount to millions for each of the Allies. I am referring to the taking over of national debts, the repurchase of public property, of sequestrations and industrial organization. For all territories transferred, the Treaty stipulated the assumption by the Nation in whose favour the cession was made of a portion of the public debt of the ceding Nation. By derogation from Article 254 I asked and obtained—Bismarck having boasted in 1871 of having assumed no portion of the French debt on Germany's behalf—that Article 254 should not apply to Alsace-Lorraine. Article 256 stipulated that Powers, to whom German territories were transferred, would acquire all property or real estate belonging to the Empire or to the States located within such territories and that the value thereof should be placed to Germany's credit by the Reparations Commission; I asked and obtained, despite this formal provision, despite the enormous increment of certain State properties—railways, for instance—since 1871 that France should have nothing to pay. Belgium alone obtained a like privilege in respect to the territories of Malmedy and Eupen. By certain no less legitimate, but no less exceptional enactments, we obtained recognition of our right to sequestrate and dispose of all property in Alsace-Lorraine belonging to Germans, as well as of the right to prohibit hereafter all German participation in private enterprises of public interest, such as mines, electric power stations, etc.....and lastly, of the right to annul

Digitized by Google

all German interests in the exploitation of potash deposits. By this clear-cut and total suppression, the rights of France were wholly restored—a matter of no less importance to us than the material advantages assured by the foregoing clauses. What a conflict of arguments before reaching this point! When at last Mr. Keynes, who had led the attack, saw that he had lost, he left our conference room with an angry gesture. He has vented his spite in his notorious book. Mr. Keynes has his book. France has the Treaty. So all is well!

Some articles remained in abeyance in which the position of France was even more delicate. To leave to victory its full moral significance, we had asked and obtained the solemn and absolute severing of all bonds forged by might between Germany and Alsace-Lorraine. But, in some things, perfectly respectable interests made it necessary to maintain temporarily economic relations, which this rupture would have jeopardized. And again it was necessary in view of the ruins caused by the war, that the maintenance of such relations, indispensable to Alsace-Lorraine, should not entail to the benefit of Germany the reciprocity generally prescribed in like matters by the Treaty; indeed, this reciprocity would only too obviously have tempted the Germans to try by commercial and industrial infiltration, to regain possession of everything that a just victory had so recently taken from them and restored to us. After what I have said of the state of mind of the Allies' experts, it can be guessed how easy this was. Despite the difficulty, France succeeded in obtaining both for herself and Alsace-Lorraine, all essential guarantees: the right for a period of five years to a special customs treatment without reciprocity for Germany; the guaranteed supply—for ten years and at the same rates as to Germans—of the electric current from the power stations on the left bank; the water power of the Rhine in its course through Alsace; the maintenance of private contracts with exclusive power to the French Government to cancel them—the maintenance in Germany and under German law of the industrial, literary and artis-

Digitized by Google

tic rights of Alsatians and Lorrainers. Each of these derogations entailed hours of discussion. The final discussion lasted five days, it was over the port of Kehl. This port created by Germany just opposite Strassburg and splendidly equipped had been purposely used to the detriment of the Alsatian port. If, after the signature of Peace, Kehl were to be free to compete in any way it chose, Strassburg would be finally throttled. So we asked that for a certain number of years Strassburg should be afforded the possibility of organizing itself and that with this in view the two ports should during this period be placed under a single management. Objections rained upon us: Kehl is a German port: a German port cannot be placed under a French comptroller....Our only reply was to ask the experts to make an investigation on the spot; as soon as they got back; our demand, contrary to precedent but in accordance with equity, was acceded to. Its success is recorded in the Treaty.

France saw herself on the other hand obliged to comply with the ordinary rule on two other questions, which the Council of Four finally decided: that of redeeming the marks and that of reparations. In Alsace-Lorraine as in our liberated regions and in Belgium, the national Government had redeemed from the inhabitants, at the rate of francs 1.25, the marks put in compulsory circulation by the German authorities during their occupation. It had consequently suffered the loss caused by the depreciation of that currency. France and Belgium demanded, not without reason, that this loss be borne by Germany. The Peace Conference decided otherwise, to avoid the contingent effect of such a principle in Central and Eastern Europe, where Germany had abused the compulsory circulation of her currency to an even greater extent. Had this debt been admitted a bottomless pit would have been opened in the reparations fund. This decision, albeit well grounded, clearly did not permit the reimbursement of the loss sustained on marks in Alsace-Lorraine more especially as, up to the time of the Armistice, the mark had been the legal

Digitized by Google

currency in that country. So the French Government itself bore the whole loss from which by redeeming the marks at francs 1.25, it had saved the Alsatians and Lorrainers. A like solution prevailed as regards the damages sustained by Alsatians and Lorrainers, which were not placed to the debit of Germany. An injustice, at first sight; why make a distinction between the damage sustained at Bacearat in France, for which Germany has to pay, and the damage sustained at Thann, in Alsace, for which she does not have to pay? Here again the decision was dictated by prudence for although the destructions in Alsace-Lorraine were relatively of slight importance, other transferred territories, such as those which passed to Poland and Roumania, would have been very difficult to verify. The reparations to the countries most severely damaged by five years of fighting would have been correspondingly reduced. The Conference thought it better not to run the risk.

Such as it is, the chapter of the Treaty dealing with Alsace-Lorraine presents a character of pure justice and draws from the war one of its grandest conclusions. Violated right restored to the full at the very point where violation had attained in modern times the maximum of its cynical brutality. To the full also is wiped out the wrong done both to these two provinces and to France and all proper steps are taken to prevent any of its consequences continuing in time of peace. It is to the honour of the Allies that they thus recognized that Alsace and Lorraine had all through Europe, infused life into the national ideal for which they had fought and by which they had conquered. At the sight of Alsatians and Lorrainers, suffering patient and undaunted for more than fifty years, Bohemia, downtrodden for centuries, began again to dream of liberty; Poland, divided into three enslaved parts, conceived possible an improbable restoration. It was in Strassburg and in Metz that the Tyrol, the Trient, Istria, Croatia, Slovania, Transylvania, the Greeks of Macedonia and Asia, the Belgians of the Walloon cantons and the Danes of Schleswig found abundant reason not to despair of the

Digitized by Google

future. It was at Alsatian firesides that all oppressed nationalities kindled their hopes of redemption or of rebirth. All these hopes and all these aspirations were fed by Alsace and Lorraine. Quickeners of French energies, our oppressed brothers have quickened all the national energies of the present age. And as a crowning act of justice, the Treaty which liberated them, has carried to darkest Europe the same resplendent message of freedom.

In December, 1917, Herr von Kuhlmann, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the German Empire, cried: "Alsace-Lorraine? Never!" Less than two years later the Treaty of Versailles gave to the arrogance of this German Minister the reply of the universal conscience of mankind. Might—this time—served Right!

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

THE SARRE BASIN

THE problem of the Sarre Basin was one of those which the American delegates to the Peace Conference, and the United States as a whole, least understood. It is the only one that led to disagreement between the French and American representatives. It lasted ten days and at times assumed an aspect of conflict. It was the basis of the most outrageous attacks upon my country. All the more reason, therefore, for leaving nothing in the dark. I shall follow the negotiations day by day, and publish the documents, hitherto secret, but which France has no need to hide, to regret or to withdraw.

A difficult problem, indeed, for it had two aspects: an economic aspect because of the coal mines, the ownership of which was essential—in equity and in fact—to a nation systematically ruined by Germany; and a moral and historic aspect because a large part of this territory was inhabited by people French by race, by tradition and by aspiration, which the Treaties of 1814 had left to France and which violence alone had torn from her in 1815. A difficult problem also because its two elements were geographically contradictory. When, strong in our national right, we demanded the return of these French people wrested from us by the Treaty of 1815, and strong in our right to reparations, we demanded the coal mines of the basin, we were confronted on the map with an undeniable conflict between these two claims. The frontier of 1814 would have given us but a part, and the less important part, of this coal basin. On the other hand, the basin itself, while exceeding by 700 square kilometers on the north, the terri-

Digitized by Google

tory included between the frontiers of 1814 and 1815, enclosed only a part of these territories. In other words, our claim to the soil did not coincide with our claim to the sub-soil, and neither the one nor the other could be abandoned.

The conclusion was evident. Justified in claiming the mines as a whole, incapable of insuring their operation on Germany territory without serious industrial, administrative and political guarantee; morally obliged and naturally anxious on historical and sentimental grounds to recover the frontier of 1814; bound by our war aims to forego any forcible annexation, we had, of necessity, to find a mixed solution, economic and political; applicable in its first part south of the 1814 frontier, in its second part north of that line. And nothing but the combination of these two solutions could satisfy the double claim which it was our duty to press.

This statement explains the difficulties encountered. These difficulties were not underestimated by the French delegations and they were met with frankness in a Memorandum which I myself drew up. Its more salient portion I reproduce here, as it has never before been published.

MEMORANDUM PRESENTED BY THE FRENCH DELEGATION

I

Restitution

The region under consideration was for many centuries united to France and was only separated from her by force.

(1) *Union with France.*

(a) Landau was ceded to France in 1648. Sarrelouis was built by Louis XIV. These two towns were represented, at the time of French Revolution, at the Federation Fête, and they proclaimed their union with the Republic "one and indivisible."

In 1793, Landau sustained a heroic siege, at the end of which the National Convention declared that "the town had earned the gratitude of the nation."

Digitized by Google

All the rest of the Sarre Basin became French between 1792 and 1795, amid the enthusiasm of the population so well described by Goethe, and their vote, expressed in eloquent petitions, still preserved in our National Archives, recorded their union with France, "in one and the same family."

(b) All these petitions deserve to be reproduced, but we will quote a few only.

Those of the Cantons of Queich, Blies and the Sarre express unanimously "the most earnest wish to be reunited to the French Republic."

Certain others, like Impflingen, make a special point of the fact that "this wish is not one for unlimited liberty, but prompted solely by *love of their native land.*"

Others, like Deux-Ponts, offer the prayer to which subsequent events have given its true significance: "to be sheltered from the wars that German despots stir up in their country every twenty years, usually for reasons entirely foreign to them."

The inhabitants of Neuenkirchen hope that France will have the "magnanimity to bestow upon them the greatest possible happiness, by pronouncing their reunion with the first of Republics," and they added: "We will do our utmost to prove worthy of this signal favour."

In the Sarre the tone is very marked. The population hope that "France may deign to admit them to the rank of beloved children, and crown her work by bestowing upon them the glorious title of Frenchmen, which they have so long carried in their hearts, and of which they will never cease to show themselves worthy."

The population of Sarrebruck phrases its feeling as follows: "May our reunion, as pure as it is inviolable, associate us with France, our *Mother country.* We shall have henceforth but one heart, one mind, one common welfare."

(c) This passionate desire to be united to France found, moreover, justification in the wise administration we gave to the country. Great public works drew the bonds of sentiment closer. France was the first to operate the mines. A mining school was founded by Napoleon at Geslautern on the left bank of the Sarre, south of Voelklingen, and the results achieved excited the covetousness of the Prussian metallurgists, whose agent, Boecking, in 1814 and 1815, conducted a campaign on behalf of his employers, in favour of Prussian annexation.

Digitized by Google

The system of State operation instituted by France still exists there. All the mining has moreover been conducted on the basis of studies made by our engineers, and our National Archives contain the receipt, signed by Prussia, of the "plans and registers relative to concessions of the coal mines of the Departments of the Sarre and the Ruhr."

(2) *Since the Separation.*

(a) It was force alone that separated these regions from France. The Treaty of Paris, May 13, 1914, had not attempted this separation, which was effected only at the request of Prussia in 1815, without reference to the wishes of the population, in order to hold France under a perpetual menace of invasion.

At the very outset several Powers, Great Britain among them, protested against the "cession of territories belonging to France, the loss of which would stir the indignation of all French hearts." Finally Prussian insistence prevailed.

Metternich condemned this operation when he wrote: "Prussia had no respect for any principle of justice or even of decency."

(b) Many of the inhabitants expatriated themselves. Others, oppressed by the Prussian administration and colonization, declared themselves to be "Prussians perforce" (*Musspreussen*).

In 1850, during the Italian war, the feeling was the same. Violent pro-French manifestations were organized at Landau. Again, in 1865, William I traveling in this region was very coldly received.

In 1866, Prince Clovis von Hohenlohe wrote in his memoirs:— "The Bavarians of the Palatinate (*i. e.* the region about Landau and north of it) would very willingly accept being transferred back to France." Prussian officials in 1870 called Sarrelouis the "*French Nest.*"

(c) German historians did not attempt to deny the feeling of "mesalliance" that persisted in the population for half a century after union with Prussia. They even found in the "faithfulness of these Rhinelanders to their memories of France" a proof of their Germanic character.

Treitschke's remarks on this subject are amusing and instructive. We gather from his description that, until 1848, the Rhinelanders had given proof of their German patriotism by vigorous defense of their French institutions against Berlin, and by the display of that invincible dislike with which their new Prussian compatriots inspired them.

(d) There exists, even to-day, in the Sarre Basin, a strong middle class and peasant element passionately attached to French

Digitized by Google

tradition. In the region of Sarrelouis, it forms a large majority. This town welcomed the French troops after the Armistice and addressed a cordial telegram to the President of the Republic. The sentiment had survived.

"The sympathies of Sarrelouis for France are stronger than might have been hoped," writes a witness. "The population would declare itself without hesitation, were it not restrained by fear of Prussian retaliation, in case the frontier were not modified..... Many people at Sarrelouis were disposed not to take part in the last elections for the German National Assembly.

"The Municipal Council of Sarrelouis proposed a secret deliberation for the purpose of demanding its reunion with France. It would gladly send a deputation to Paris if this were desired. Even now, we may be sure that Sarrelouis would send to the Chamber a deputy of French sympathies."

To sum up, the whole of this country which was French for a long time and never had any reason to complain of French sovereignty, was wrested from France by force, without the inhabitants having been consulted. In spite of the Prussian immigration it has kept its remembrance of the past and in spite of continual divisions, recalling those of Poland, it remains at least partly French in sentiment.

(3) *Possible Objections.*

(a) Two objections have been offered.

The separation, though violent and unjust, dates back a century. Is it possible to blot out one hundred years of history?

Besides, must we not take into consideration the great German immigration, systematically carried on through half a century, which has profoundly modified the population?

(b) To the first objection it may be answered that in the opinion of the Conference time does not suffice to eliminate righteous claims. Poland is revived after more than a century, and Bohemia after more than four centuries.

To the second objection, the French Government can also oppose some of the most justifiable decisions of the Conference.

The systematical colonization of a country conquered by force is not an excuse for the outrage to which it has been subjected. It is rather an aggravation.

Prussian colonization in Poland, German colonization in Bohemia, Magyar colonization in Transylvania, did not prevent the Powers from heeding the wishes of peoples conquered in the past, or from restoring their rights.

Digitized by Google

France claims the same treatment.

(4) *Conclusions to be drawn from the Principle of Restitution.*

The minimum France claims, under this head, is the frontier of 1814. The line of this frontier is as follows:

Starting from the Rhine, south of Germersheim, it takes in Landau and, at Weissenburg, joins the 1815 frontier which it follows till it reaches the valley of Sarrelouis. From this last point it forms two salients, north of Sarrebruck and Sarrelouis, and joins the French frontier of 1815 about sixty kilometers south of Merzig.

In its details, this line shows the influence of principalities which have disappeared.

Eventual altercations would, therefore, be required in its application; but, as a whole, it represents a principle which cannot be questioned.

This principle, France has a right to invoke.

II

Reparation

The region which, north of Alsace Lorraine, is its geographical continuation and extends beyond the frontier of 1814 is a mining and industrial region, of well marked character. This region is known as the Basin of the Sarre.

(1) *Brief Description of the Region.*

(a) The Sarre Basin, which is triangular in form, its base running parallel to the Sarre between Sarrebruck and Sarrelouis, and its apex being at Frankenholz (nine kilometers northwest of Homburg) has an economic unity derived from its coal.

There are three principal groups of mines; the first situated in the Valley of the Sarre, from Sarrelouis to just above Sarrebruck; the second, around Neuenkirchen; the third, in the region of St. Ingbert.

Around these mines has developed an industrial region in which the three main industries, in the order of their importance, are: metallurgy, glass making and pottery.

(b) This whole region, mining as well as industrial, is inhabited by miners and factory workers. Nearly all of them are natives of the country.

Many have small houses and cultivate a little plot of ground. In 1912, 39 per cent. of those who worked in the mines belonging to the Government were owners of real estate, 65 per cent. being

Digitized by Google

married. The unmarried were nearly all sons of miners in the district and lived with their parents.

Thanks to a highly developed system of communications (including both standard and narrow gauge railways, electric tramways and motor-car services), it is possible for these workers, 72,000 in number, to live at a certain distance from the mines which are the very heart of the district. More than 40 per cent. of them avail themselves of this privilege.

In other words, the Sarre Basin forms an entity the three elements of which are: a mining zone (very incompletely developed); an industrial zone, which is the outgrowth of the former; and finally a workers' zone which extends beyond the other two and is connected with them by railroads, of which Homburg is the most important center.

(c) In this basin, the component parts of which are so interdependent, any artificial separation would be ruinous.

A frontier cutting in two the basin and its railroads, would place the non-French section at a disadvantage, since it would have to compete with the Westphalian factories on the German side and, at the same time, would be isolated on the French side from the Briey ore which is the necessary complement of the Sarre coal.

The financial situation would be no less disadvantageous because, the mark falling below the franc, remuneration for the same work would be different in the two sections, owing to the exchange.

Finally, the labour situation would be equally deplorable. First on account of transportation, for many of the workers would find a frontier between their place of residence and their place of work: second on account of wages, for the various reasons already enumerated: and finally on account of the cost of production; of working regulations, of social laws and the maintenance of order in times of strike.

(d) Recent facts have, moreover, revealed the unity of the region.

On the one hand several of the big Prussian manufacturers, actuated by economic consideration, have made significant approaches to the French authorities with a view to maintaining this unity.

On the other hand, since the Armistice, the French authorities charged with the supervision of the local administration have been unanimous in recognizing the impossibility of separating the mining, industrial and working men's districts. They all declared the

Digitized by Google

danger which would result, even during the transitional period of the Armistice, from the establishment of barriers between the different circles (bezirks), constituting the Basin. The military organization has thus been placed, though temporarily, on the basis of the economic unity of the region. The results have been excellent.

(2) *France's Special Title to Reparation in the Sarre Basin.*

(a) It is notorious that the industrial destruction committed by Germany in France was especially directed against the coal and industrial zone of the departments of the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais. Two-thirds of the surface, as well as of the production of this zone, have been systematically destroyed by the invader.

This destruction was committed in the following order:—

First, the flooding of the Lens Basin, resulting in an annual loss of eight million tons of coal.

Next, the destruction of the Courrières Basin and of Dourges, resulting in an annual loss of four million tons.

Finally, the general devastation of the coal district of the departments of the Nord, resulting in an annual loss of eight million tons.

(b) This destruction was not the result of chance or of war operations. It was an integral part of the economic plan of the German Staff. This plan, which was printed in Munich, by order of the German Quartermaster General, in February, 1916, and which was the work of 200 experts covering 4,031 operations, disclosed in detail the benefit anticipated by Germany from the disappearance of the French mines and industries. Premeditation is thus thoroughly established.*

This premeditation is explained as regards the Basin of the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais by its keen competition with the Westphalian Basin.

(c) The results of the methodical operations conducted by Germany are as follows:

Two hundred shafts rendered useless for several years.

All plants in existence at that date entirely destroyed.

A production of over twenty million tons, or 50 per cent. of the national production, withdrawn from the country:

A production of corresponding by-products equally eliminated, viz.:

*See Chapter IX, page 281.

Digitized by Google

Coke	2,243,000	tons
Briquettes	1,674,925	"
Sulphate of Ammonia	23,200	"
Benzol	13,900	"
Coal Tar	61,000	"

The labour population of 100,000 workmen, thrown out of work and their families reduced to want.

In all, a material damage of at least two thousand million francs gold (price of 1912) to which should be added loss of production during the ten years required for reconstruction.

It is enough to state these facts to establish France's right to complete reparation.

(3) *France after the War.*

(a) If France, at the conclusion of peace, were not in possession of the Sarre Basin, her economic position would be disastrous.

France needs this basin, not only to furnish coal to Alsace and Lorraine which consume seven million tons more than they produce, but for herself also.

Before the war, France imported annually 23,000,000 tons. With the added needs of Alsace and Lorraine, she would therefore without the Sarre coal be obliged to import even after the re-establishment of her mines in the North, thirty million tons, and, until this re-establishment, fifty millions out of a total consumption of seventy-five millions.

(b) This situation is summarized in the following table which calls for no comment:

	In millions of tons.	
France's consumption of coal (1913)	63	
Consumption by Alsace-Lorraine (1913)	12	
Total consumption		75
France's production in coal (1913)	40	
Destruction of the French mines during the war	20	
France's production of coal up to date	20	
Production of Alsace-Lorraine	4	
Total production up to date		24
Coal to be imported up to date		51

Digitized by Google

(c) In other words, France would be economically tributary to Germany, who, through coal, would control the prices of all our steel and iron in the east and thus dominate our policies.

German manufacturers themselves wrote in their Memorandum to the Chancellor on May 20, 1915: "Coal is one of the most decisive of political factors. The neutral countries are dependent upon the belligerent who can supply them with coal."

Consequently if France were left without coal Germany's domination over her would be assured.

Such a situation would mean imposing upon France defeat in peace after victory in war.

(4) *The Cession of the Sarre Basin is indispensable as a reparation from the general point of view.*

(a) It is not only reparation for the special damage done to French mines that is here involved. It is the whole problem of Germany's indebtedness to France.

The amount of reparation for which Germany is indebted to France on account of devastations is a difficult financial problem, complicated by the just claims of other Allied Powers.

It is doubtful whether the means of payment which Germany has at present at her disposal, or which she will have in the course of the next few years, will enable her even approximately to meet the estimates for this reparation, the total of which amounts to 1,000,000 millions.

(b) Therefore in her own interest as well as in that of her creditors it is indispensable that Germany should avail herself of every possible means to discharge her debt.

It must be recalled that:—

Germany is one of the greatest coal-producing countries in the world, and that her production exceeds her consumption (she extracted before the war 191 million tons and consumed 137), without counting 87 million tons of lignite, which gives for 1914 a total production of 278 million tons.

The coal mines constitute a sure resource and yield a product readily convertible into money.

Coal, like all other raw materials, has an intrinsic value independent of the German exchange situation, and therefore eliminates one of the most difficult problems in the financial settlement.

In these circumstances we are led to consider the cession of the German part of the Coal Basin of the Sarre as a necessary element of the reparation due by Germany to France.

Digitized by Google

(c) The Sarre Basin produced in 1912-1913:—

Prussian Mines	12,730,000
Bavarian Mines	896,000
Lorraine Mines	3,846,000
Total	17,472,000

The production of that part of the basin situated north of the frontier of Alsace-Lorraine represents therefore 13,626,000 tons.

It is difficult to calculate the value of these mines—this value depending naturally upon the net cost of production, upon the sale price and upon the duration of the mines, etc.

In any event the mineral wealth of the basin estimated, for layers worked at a depth of at least 1,000 meters, amounts to *3,660 million tons.*

It is therefore wise and just to take account of so important a resource in the general account of reparations.

(5) *This necessary reparation is an easy reparation.*

(a) The Sarre Mines belong almost in their entirety to the Prussian and Bavarian Treasuries.

Total Surface	116,000 Hectares
Prussian Fiscal Mines	110,000 "
Bavarian Fiscal Mines	4,000 "

The cession from State to State presents no difficulty; the few private mines that exist would be repurchased by the German State from their owners and ceded to the French State.

As has previously been mentioned, the Sarre Basin through its cession will revert to the country which developed its value and which after having done so was deprived of it by force.

(b) No economic break will result from this cession.

Indeed, the economic outlet of these mines is to the South for they competed in the North with Westphalian coal to which Prussia has always sacrificed them.

It suffices to recall that with this in view Germany has constantly opposed the canalization of the Sarre below Sarrebruck and of the Moselle as far as the Rhine. The only water communication which she decided to grant to the Sarre Basin, was the canal of the coal mines which at present has no outlet except on French territory at Nancy on one hand, and at Strassburg on the other. It may therefore be said that it was Germany herself who in order to protect the interests of the rival Westphalian Basin, imposed and

Digitized by Google

maintained the outlet of the Sarre in the direction of France and Alsace-Lorraine.

Before becoming French citizens in 1793, several magnates of the region alleged in a Memorandum addressed to the Representatives of the People, that: "Commerce—the exchange of our iron, our timber and our coal for goods produced by French factories—has cemented and maintained the bond between the inhabitants and the French."

At present, Alsace-Lorraine, France, Italy and Switzerland are important buyers in the Sarre Basin. The return of Alsace-Lorraine to France and the orientation that Germany deliberately gave the basin can only serve to develop this situation in the near future.

(c) Finally, the prejudice to Germany will not be of a nature to compromise her economic equilibrium so far as coal is concerned. The following table so indicates:

Total production of Germany in 1913 (without counting eighty-seven million tons of lignite)	191,000,000
Production of the Sarre	13,626,000
Balance	177,374,000
Total consumption in 1913	137,000,000
Surplus after cession of the Sarre	40,374,000

5° *Conclusions drawn from the Principle of Reparation.*

As special reparation for the destruction of her mines, as well as a necessary element in the total reparation, France is justified in claiming the Sarre Basin.

By the Sarre Basin must be understood:

(a) The mines operated.

(b) Layers not yet exploited.

(c) Industrial Region (factories, steel works, foundries, etc.,) which owes its existence to the basin and forms part of it.

The profound unity of this region has already been referred to.

To separate it into several sections would be ruinous and a source of innumerable vexations for the inhabitants.

This separation moreover would render the operation of the mines impossible or in any event exceedingly difficult. It should therefore not be considered.

For these reasons France's minimum claim under the head of Reparations, includes the region delimitated by the following line:

Digitized by Google

Starting from the frontier of 1815 to the point where it is crossed by the French Nied, this line includes in the Basin of the Sarre the valley and the villages of the French Nied—passes by Beckingen (excluded), Duppenweiter-Bettingen, Tholey, St. Wendel, Werschweiter, Kuselberg, (two kilometers east of Momburg) Kirrberg, Einod, (all these preceding localities included), and joins the frontier of 1814 and 1815 in following the ridge valleys of the Blies and the Bickenhall.

This Memorandum, based upon the admirable essays of Professor Gallois and his colleagues of the Comité d'Etudes,* was explained and interpreted to our Allies in the course of numerous conferences during the months of January and February. It offered a three-term solution imposed upon us by the circumstances: restoration to French sovereignty of the territories south of the frontier of 1814; a special political administration for the territories of the mineral and industrial basin north of this frontier; full ownership of the mines in these two zones. Our Memorandum was distributed in March to the heads of the delegations. The discussion thus prepared, opened a few days later.

II

On the morning of March 28, M. Loucheur and I were summoned by the Council of the Four to President Wilson's residence. We were jointly entrusted with the verbal presentation of the French case. The moment we entered the meeting our impression was formed. Mr. Lloyd George did not attribute first rate importance to this matter. President Wilson on the contrary, wore a quizzical smile that foreshadowed objections.

I will not reproduce the statement made that day by M. Loucheur and myself, the whole substance of which was borrowed from the document I have just quoted. The first interruptions showed us just where we stood. Mr. Lloyd George without hesitation expressed himself in favour of our contention so far as the ownership of the mines was

*See Chapter III, page 86.

Digitized by Google

concerned. He recognized that this ownership was due to us as a just compensation. With regard to the territories, he was less categorical. He admitted that an autonomous organization ought to be established for the entire coal basin; in other words that it should be detached from Germany. On the other hand, however, he did not admit our right to possess both the territories and the coal, and our claim for the frontier of 1814 alarmed him; he repeated the formula so often heard during the discussions: "Let us not renew the mistake committed by Germany in 1871 in the name of a fictitious historical right. Do not let us create a new Alsace-Lorraine."

Mr. Wilson, who at first had said nothing, then spoke. Mr. Lloyd George had accepted the greater part of our claims; the President, on the contrary, rejected them all. He admitted our right to take from the Sarre Basin a quantity of coal equal to the deficit from our mines, due to the war. But he refused us the ownership of the mines, the frontier of 1814, and the autonomous organization suggested by Mr. Lloyd George. His point of view, presented in the most friendly, but most emphatic manner, was as follows:

"Never has France, in any public document, claimed the frontier of 1814. The bases of peace accepted by her speak of reparation for the wrong which she suffered in 1871—and not in 1815.

"Now these bases bind the Allies. The historical argument used by Germany against France to justify her theft of Alsace and Lorraine is a dangerous one. Let us avoid using it.

"The frontier of 1814 does not correspond to any economic reality. It would ruin the basin by cutting it in two, without assuring coal to France. A cession of territory, without an immediate plebiscite, would under these conditions be inadmissible.

"There is no Nation more intelligent than the French. If I thus frankly express my point of view I do not fear her judgment. I have so high an opinion of the intelli-

Digitized by Google

gence of the French Nation that I believe she will always accept a principle based upon justice and applied fairly.

"I do not believe that this problem can be compared with that of Alsace-Lorraine. For half a century the world had its eyes turned towards Alsace-Lorraine. For half a century the world has never thought of those provinces as being German. The question of the frontier of 1814 has not quite the same character.

"I am ready to recognize that France should have the use of the mines for a period that shall be determined; but as there can be no question of depriving the local industries of coal the question of the ownership of the mines appears to me to be purely sentimental.

"I regret to make these objections and I apologize for it. It is painful to me to oppose France's wishes. But I could not act otherwise without failing in my duty."

The discussion from this time on went to the very roots of the problem. M. Clemenceau, who had allowed his colleagues to answer questions of fact and figures put by President Wilson, felt it necessary to intervene, and did so with rare elevation of thought.

"I have," he said, "a serious reservation to make. You eliminate sentiment and memory. The world is not guided by principles alone.

"You say you are ready to render us justice from the economic point of view, and I thank you for it. But economic interests are not everything. The history of the United States is glorious, but brief. One hundred and twenty years is a very long period for you; for us it is a short one. Our conception of history cannot be quite the same as yours.

"Our ordeals have created in us a profound sentiment of the reparation due us. The point at issue is not material reparation only; the need for moral reparation is no less great.

"I know all that you have done for victory but I believe that you will lose nothing by recognizing in this question

Digitized by Google

a sentiment which is something different from your principles, but no less profound.

"When Lafayette and Rochambeau—two youths—went to the aid of America struggling for her independence, it was not cold reason or deeds of valour, common enough after all, which sowed the seed of affectionate gratitude which has sprung from their action; but an impression, a deep fellow-feeling that has linked our two nations forever.

"I am old. In a few months I shall have left politics forever. My disinterestedness is complete. I will defend before Parliament the conclusions that we shall reach here together; but if you do not listen to me to-day, you will lose an opportunity of riveting yet another link in the chain of affection binding France to America.

"There are, in this region, 150,000 Frenchmen. These men who in 1918 sent addresses to President Poincaré have also a right to justice. You wish to respect the rights of the Germans. So do I. But bear in mind the rights of these Frenchmen as you will have to bear in mind later the historic rights of Bohemia and of Poland.

"We shall soon resume this discussion. For the moment I merely ask you, when you are alone, to think over all I have just said to you and ask your conscience whether it does not contain a great deal of truth."

Thus, two principles confront each other. On one side, economic arguments which can be shown in figures; on the other side, moral arguments which can be weighed. On both sides a lively and honest desire for agreement, but the impossibility of reaching this agreement. Mr. Lloyd George favours a compromise. But the historical argument so dear to the French heart has no weight with any of our Allies. Our entire contention is disputed. We are far from the goal and the road is long and hard.

This dramatic meeting ended at twelve-thirty. At two o'clock M. Clemenceau, M. Loucheur and I met again at the War Office and went over the situation which was not promising. Frontier of 1814—we were alone, therefore without hope of success. Ownership of the mines and crea-

Digitized by Google

tion of an autonomous state—we had Great Britain's support without, however, adequate guarantees either for the operation of the mines or above all for the liberation of the French inhabitants of the Sarre. Long experience had taught us that reasoning borrowed from the past had but little appeal for Mr. Wilson: there he feared to find the germ of new wars. The one point on which we felt a lesser resistance was the economic problem. Mr. Wilson contested our ownership of the mines: but already he recognized our right to work them. It was upon that point, therefore, that M. Clemenceau, M. Loucheur and I agreed unanimously to make our first effort. We would assert simultaneously two principles, distinct in their character but one in their consequence. The first was that operation of the mines required a special political organization of the territory. The second, that if our Allies believe there are too many Germans in the Sarre Basin to justify an immediate reunion with France, we on the other hand deem that there are in this same basin too many people of French origin and aspirations for France to consent to leave them under Prussian domination. The assertion of these three principles—ownership, complete guarantee of operation through a special political administration, safeguards for the rights of the inhabitants—became the bulwark of our defense. We dealt with them in three Notes, dated respectively March 29, and April 1 and 5. I publish the first below:

March 29.

NOTE ON THE SARRE QUESTION

France demands first that the preliminaries of peace should permanently guarantee:

(a) Full ownership of all the mines of the Sarre.

(b) An economic régime which, on the soil, would permit the development of the sub-soil.

If the Sarre coal were found under the soil of the Ruhr, France would ask nothing more.

We ask more because the soil of the Sarre was formerly French soil:

Digitized by Google

—in part for nearly two centuries

—in part for more than twenty years

and during the Revolution, when the right of self-determination for all nations was applied for the first time, this country was entirely incorporated with France "one and indivisible" by the free vote of its people.

It was wrested from France against the will of its inhabitants. This was the first manifestation of the military and economic imperialism of Prussia from the moment she became our neighbor—an imperialism whose traces it is the first object of the Treaty of Peace to obliterate.

It is true that, on this soil germanized for one hundred years, the majority of the population is German owing to immigration.

We recognize this fact by not claiming annexation. On the other hand we insist on a solution which would recognize in part at least France's unquestionable claim on a country consecrated French by the will of its inhabitants.

This country has been French. The fact creates the presumption that it will become so again gladly. The example of Alsace-Lorraine is there to prove it. We already know that the majority of the inhabitants living in the circle of Sarrelouis are ready to demand their reunion with France.

In order to allow time in all fairness to undo what was done a century ago by force, it is just that the question of the sovereignty of this region should not be settled immediately.

For the time being it will not be placed under the sovereignty either of Germany or of France, but under the protection of the League of Nations.

The Germans in this region will retain their nationality.

But, like Germans living in a foreign country they will take no part in the elections for the German Assemblies.

They will vote for the local Assemblies (District Council and Municipalities).

The German officials, appointed by the Central Administration, will be withdrawn.

All facilities for the liquidation of their possessions will be given Germans who desire to leave the country.

France will receive from the League of Nations a double mandate:

(1) Military occupation.

(2) Right of visa or veto on the local administration (including the schools), the nomination of Mayors and deputy Mayors.

Digitized by Google

French nationality will be conferred individually and after investigation upon those who ask for it.

When in each of the principal administrative sections the majority of the electors shall have adopted French nationality, or rather when the district council shall ask for annexation to France, this annexation will occur *de jure* upon its acceptance by the League of Nations.

At the end of fifteen years the inhabitants who have not already manifested their choice must be given an opportunity to do so. No demand for reunion with Germany would be considered before that date as this term of fifteen years is fixed precisely with a view to allowing events to shape themselves and the population to decide justly and freely as to its sovereignty. Prussia had one hundred years to consolidate her work of violence.

The solution outlined above enables us to meet the two objections formulated against the French demands:—

First objection: It is a new claim advanced by France, who had hitherto spoken only of Alsace-Lorraine.

Here also is a question of Alsace and of Lorraine for it is a question of their frontier. French Lorraine mutilated in 1871 had already been mutilated in 1815. Time without doubt has placed these two frontiers on different planes. But the proposed solution respects them.

The Lorraine of Metz and Thionville will be immediately detached from Germany. The Lorraine of Sarrebruck will be given time to decide to which of the two countries, having already been governed by them both, she wishes to be attached definitely in view of the fact that her re-attachment to Prussia one hundred years ago was entirely due to violence.

Second objection: It is a breach in the principle of the right of self-determination of peoples.

No. Nothing definite or irreparable is decided. On the contrary homage is rendered to this principle in giving the population the opportunity under the protection of the League of Nations to decide upon a matter concerning which Germany—as opposed to France—has never consulted them, *i. e.* the sovereignty under which they desire to live in the future, in view of the possible hesitation created by the double historic title of the two countries.

To sum up, if on the one hand our Allies deem France's right to the region of the Sarre insufficient to justify immediate re-annexation, on the other hand, France deems these rights too important for her to accept the definite adjudication of the Sarre

Digitized by Google

Basin to Germany by the Treaty. An intermediate régime should therefore be considered.

We now went at once to the heart of the discussion. The Note just read establishes the fact that if, in order to reach an agreement we eventually decide to give up the frontier of 1814, we yield neither on the question of the liberation of the French population of the Sarre, the ownership of the mines, nor on the special political régime necessary for their operation. After this triple assertion which defines the limits of the debate, we take up, to deal with the problems one by one, the long chapter of the mining clauses. The question of ownership is settled on March 31, when Mr. Wilson agrees to the transfer of the mines to France with certain guarantees of an economic order but on the condition that there should be no question either of displacing the frontier or of creating an independent State. His proposal which did not give us satisfaction but from which a week later we are to evolve the solution is as follows:

It is agreed in principle:

1. That full ownership of the coal mines of the Sarre Basin should pass to France to be credited on her claims against Germany for reparation.

2. That for the exploitation of these mines the fullest economic facilities shall be accorded to France, including particularly:

(a) Exemption from taxation on the part of Germany, including important export dues.

(b) Full mobility of labour, foreign and native.

(c) Freedom for the development of adequate means of communication by rail and water.

3. That the political and administrative arrangements necessary to secure the foregoing results be inquired into.

We are still far from the goal. Nevertheless on one important item, the points of view begin to harmonize. M. Clemenceau seizes the occasion. He takes the paper handed to him by the President. He reads and re-reads it—saying neither yes nor no. He states that before answering he must consult his advisers. So a committee of three is formed. I represent France, and I have the assist-

Digitized by Google

ance of M. Louis Aubert, who for two years had most successfully directed the Press and Information Service of the French High Commission in America, and of M. Deflinne, Director of Mines. Professor Charles H. Haskins is the American delegate; Mr. Headlam Morley the British. France should remember the names of these two men; their uprightness and sympathetic understanding of our rights played a most important part in the results obtained. After ten meetings of several hours each, the demands of our engineers are accepted and on certain points completed. We agree on the technical conditions of the operation of the mines in German territory by the French State which was to own them. But that does not satisfy me. No technical clauses can avail if, on all sides, political and administrative pressure is to distort and warp them. I appeal to the good faith of my British and American colleagues with whom I was convinced in these circumstances, as in all others, I should not plead in vain and I obtain from them their signatures at the end of our report to the following declaration, the importance of which I need not emphasize:

> The undersigned are agreed in the opinion that if the above articles which appear to be necessary from the social and economic point of view were to be applied without the establishment of a special administrative and political régime, serious difficulties and conflicts would inevitably arise.
>
> (signed)
>
> André Tardieu
> Charles H. Haskins
> Headlam Morley.

Thus the second part of the problem rejected on March 31 by President Wilson and no less important for us than the first, is put forward by those who, up to that time, had not been entrusted with its discussion. From then on the negotiation is solidly established and if we finally have to give up our claim to the frontier of 1814, we shall at least obtain liberal and essential compensations; but not without another effort.

Digitized by Google

On the morning of April 8, Mr. Lloyd George, after reading Mr. Headlam Morley's report, frankly sides with us. We offer either the establishment of an independent State linked to France by a Customs Union, or the sovereignty of the League of Nations with a mandate given to France, and a plebiscite at the end of fifteen years. Mr. Lloyd George presents at the same time two propositions similar to ours, and in a few words states his opinion:

"I would give the Sarre Basin its independence under the authority of the League of Nations.

"A Customs Union would attach it to France. There does not exist, it is true, any natural economic link between this region and Germany. All its relations are with Alsace and Lorraine.

"We must also not forget that this country was French in its greater part until the beginning of the nineteenth century; that it was taken away from France by force in spite of the opposition of English statesmen.

"We are opposed to all annexation. But we do not believe that it is possible for this region to live if we do not make it a political unit.

"I am convinced that, if in a few years a plebiscite takes place, this population will not ask to belong again to Germany."

Mr. House that day represented President Wilson who was ill. He admits that these solutions are "very interesting and worthy of close examination." It seems that a step forward has been made.

But on the same day, the eighth in the afternoon, President Wilson, who has returned to his place, again voices his hesitations. He approves our plan of economic clauses. On the other hand he approves neither change nor suspension of sovereignty. He also rejects the suggestion of a mandate and to meet the danger pointed out by us of incidents and conflicts, hands us a Note which merely proposes, instead of an independent political unit, the setting up of a Commission of Arbitration to settle the differences between the French mines and the German Government.

Digitized by Google

M. Clemenceau refuses. A short and lively debate ensues with a brisk volley of questions and answers. The President implores us not to make the peace of the world depend upon the question of the Sarre. M. Clemenceau replies that the peace of the world demands, first of all, that justice be established among the Allies. No conclusion is reached. The atmosphere is tense. Since March 27, the minor officials at the Hotel Crillon are nervous. The Chief of the Press Service, Mr. Ray Stannard Baker, is particularly active in spreading pessimistic reports. On April 6, he accuses M. Clemenceau of "claiming annexations." The following day, the seventh, the rumour spreads that the President, discouraged, has ordered the *George Washington* to Brest. The hour is critical.

III

Once again, M. Clemenceau, M. Loucheur and I meet on April 8 at the War Office at seven o'clock in the evening. We weigh the consequence of an adverse decision. Nevertheless we decide not to yield. A Note, which I write during the night, states the reasons for our resistance. This Note distributed very early the next morning to the heads of Governments asserts both our spirit of conciliation and the impossibility of our making any further concessions. This is the text:

April 9.

ANSWER TO PRESIDENT WILSON'S NOTE OF APRIL 8.

I. Preliminary observations:

The Note presented by President Wilson to M. Clemenceau on March 31 was worded as follows:

"It is agreed in principle:

"(1) That full ownership of the coal mines of the Sarre Basin should pass to France to be credited on her claims against Germany for reparation.

"(2) That for the exploitation of these mines the fullest economic facilities shall be accorded to France, including particularly:

Digitized by Google

"(a) Exemption from taxation on the part of Germany including import and export dues.

"(b) Full mobility of labour, foreign and native.

"(c) Freedom for the development of adequate means of communication by rail and water.

"(3) That the political and administrative arrangements necessary to secure the foregoing results should be inquired into."

With reference to this Note the three designated experts drew up a set of economic clauses which they recognized as just and necessary, both in the interest of the working of the basin as well as for its general prosperity and the welfare of the population.

The experts at the same time gave as their opinion that certain of these clauses would, in application, cause inevitable friction and conflict unless a special political and administrative régime were established.

The Note presented by President Wilson on April 8 accepts, save for certain amendments, the economic clauses, but carries no political or administrative clauses.

In effect, it creates a Court of Arbitration for settling conflicts, but does nothing to prevent the said conflicts.

In other words the Note of April 8 recognizes that conflicts will be inevitable, and confines itself to establishing a jurisdiction which, in every case, will decide between France and Germany.

Thus the Sarre Basin will in final analysis be under the administration of a court.

Such a régime of perpetual lawsuits seems inacceptable not only for France and for Germany but also in the interests of the populations of the Sarre and of world peace.

II. Proofs that conflicts would arise.

Examination of the articles proves that conflicts would be sure to arise. For example:—

Article 9. If German sovereignty and administration remain intact, how will it be possible to apply French law in the matter of labour, recruiting, wages, etc., for only a part of the workmen of the basin?

Article 12. How can the powers of police inspectors, appointed by the French State, be conciliated with the application of German justice and police?

Article 13. How will France be able to exercise her visa on the mining, industrial and social regulations if she has no official or administrative standing? Let us suppose that Weimar were to pass

Digitized by Google

laws reducing working hours to six for an electric station supplying the mines. How in such a case would the miners be able to work eight hours under the French régime?

Article 16. How can the territory of the Sarre be submitted to a French Customs Administration if France has no administrative personnel there or any other title than ownership of the mines? A Customs House cannot exist without Customs officers.

All these articles are necessary and economically just, but require an administrative and political complement which the experts have demanded and which the Note of April 8 does not provide. Many similar examples could be quoted.

III. General consequences of the proposed system.

According to the terms suggested by President Wilson the solution would be as follows:—

(1) The inhabitants would be represented in the Reichstag where incidents could be artificially provoked.

(2) The whole German and Prussian administrative system that has oppressed the region for one hundred years would be continued.

(3) Every economic measure however indispensable taken by the French Government would be indefinitely held up by the German authorities who, to this end, would have only to bring an action before the Court of Arbitration.

(4) If the 72,000 workmen placed under French labour laws started a strike, what legislation could be applied in the basin?

Franco-German friction would thus be multiplied in this region and would be reflected in all the relations between the two countries. No special and local Tribunal would be able to repair the damage done in this way.

The Sarre Basin, under such a régime, would become a European Morocco with all and more than all the defects of the Algeciras Act. It would be a hot-bed and forcing ground for continual Franco-German conflicts.

IV. France's two essential interests are defeated.

Moreover, the arrangement suggested satisfies neither of the two essential interests which the French Government must safeguard.

(1) As regards the sub-soil.

The ownership of the mines as a perpetual right was agreed to by President Wilson's Note to M. Clemenceau on March 31. France claimed that this coal to which she had a right of reparation

Digitized by Google

was indispensable to her and to Alsace-Lorraine. Now the Note of April 8 considers the simple cession of this right of ownership after fifteen years. France cannot agree to such an arrangement.

(2) As regards the soil.

The President of the United States objected to France's first claim that there are on this territory—formerly French in its greater part—too many German elements due to German immigration for an immediate union with France to be acceptable. The French Government agreed on March 28 to examine another solution but it constantly declared that there are on this same territory too many French elements henceforth turned towards her for France to renounce safeguarding for the future their right to be reunited to her.

Moreover, in order to ensure this reunion in fifteen years by the free vote of the population, the minimum condition is that the territory until then be withdrawn from the pressure of Prussian administration to which it has been subjected for one hundred years.

This administration (elections, functionaries, etc.) which the Note of April 8 leaves in force would give the Germans the weapon for that terrorism whereby they have always ruled, and would deprive the inhabitants of that "fair chance" of liberation which France wishes to procure for them.

France agrees that all guarantees, even that of nationality, be given to the inhabitants as individuals. But she cannot admit that the economic and social mandate which will be entrusted to her be mortgaged at every turn by the exercise of Prussian sovereignty and administration.

V. Conclusion.

To sum up, the French Government, after having carefully studied President Wilson's Note of April 8, believes that this Note:

(1) Does not contain the administrative and political clauses which the experts' report of April 5 deems indispensable in order to avoid conflicts.

(2) Involves, by reason of this fact, great risk of stirring up local and general complications.

(3) Supplies Germany with a permanent means of obstructing French operation of the mines of the basin.

(4) Entirely re-opens the question at the expiration of fifteen years of France's right of ownership over the mines which was sanctioned by President Wilson's Note of March 31.

Digitized by Google

(5) Does not insure to the population in view of the proposed plebiscite the indispensable guarantees necessary after one hundred years of Prussian oppression.

The French Government wishes therefore to adhere to one of Mr. Lloyd George's proposals in harmony with those which it has itself formulated.

It is ready to complete them in conformity with President Wilson's suggestions:

(a) By a plebiscite after fifteen years;

(b) By a Court of Arbitration appointed to settle possible conflicts in the application of one or the other of these three solutions.

(signed) G. Clemenceau.

Henceforth the positions could hardly be modified or the solution much delayed. April 9 would in fact be decisive. At the morning meeting Mr. Lloyd George gave his full approval to our Note of the previous day and drew attention to the fact that the plebiscite at the end of fifteen years answered President Wilson's objections. The latter still holds out. But he and his counsellors waver under the force of our arguments.

The afternoon of the ninth he presents a new text which, without conferring the mandate upon France transformed into an administrative commission the Commission of Arbitration which he had suggested the previous day. I ask the President three essential questions:

1°—Will German sovereignty be suspended?

2°—Will the Commission have full rights, including that of dismissing officials?

3°—Will the elections to the Reichstag be suppressed?

President Wilson answers: "Yes."

On hearing this affirmative answer M. Clemenceau agrees to leave to the Committee, composed of Mr. Haskins, Mr. Morley and myself, the task of drafting a clause.

Working from five o'clock in the afternoon until three o'clock in the morning, our Committee, assisted by technical and legal experts, completes this task and on the morning of the tenth the draft is submitted to the Council of Four

Digitized by Google

who accept it: it will become Section 4 of Part III of the Treaty. It sets forth in forty-six articles the principles which since March 28 France had defended before the Conference. The mines are yielded to us in full ownership with the most minute guarantees for their operation. In order to assure the rights and welfare of the population the Government is transferred for fifteen years to the League of Nations which delegates it to a Commission of five members. This Commission will have all the powers hitherto belonging to the German Empire, Prussia and Bavaria. A Customs Union will be established between France and the territory of the Sarre. At the end of fifteen years the population will vote by districts on the following questions: reunion with Germany: union with France: continuance of autonomy. If a mining district voted for Germany the latter would have the right to repurchase the mines of that district but with the obligation to supply France with the corresponding quantity of coal called for by her industrial and domestic needs. In all other cases the total ownership of the mines goes to France.

These provisions, like the rest of the Treaty, have been subjected to contradictory criticisms, some people finding them insufficient, others excessive. The latter criticisms have been keener than the former and have furnished anti-French propaganda with valuable material.

What can be said in reply to the first of these two criticisms which is not already clear from what precedes? We have not obtained the frontier of 1814. The complete silence on this point in the Allies' declarations on December 21, 1916, and January 10, 1917, as well as in the parliamentary resolutions in the month of June following did not, it must be confessed, render the task of the French delegation any easier. Besides who could deny that this frontier would have given us but a small part of the coal; that it would have ruined the economic unity of the basin; and that it would have involved the risk of having protesting German deputies in our parliamentary bodies? It was to these arguments continually put forward by our Allies,

Digitized by Google

which were by no means devoid of force, that we had finally to sacrifice our initial contention. At last we won both our right to full ownership of the mines and self-determination for the population. Henceforth the French of the Sarre are liberated from Prussian oppression and the future is theirs.

This solution is bad, was the criticism of some, not because insufficient, but because abusive, vexatious, hypocritical, injurious to the liberty of peoples. It has hurt France deeply to see an English writer parrot the arguments put forward on this subject by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau in his Note of May 29, 1919. But to such evil reasoning facts give answer. An imperialist solution of the problem of the Sarre? This would have perhaps meant re-annexation pure and simple to France. Instead of this re-annexation the Treaty provides for the plebiscite which will respect the rights of the inhabitants. Without it two things were possible: either annexation to France, thus depriving the German population of the right to choose its sovereignty; or the maintenance of the *statu quo* whereby nearly 150,000 people of the Sarre, as French in their hearts and their aspirations as the Alsatians and Lorrainers, would remain forever under the German heel. The Peace Conference would have neither the first nor the second of these solutions; determined to have neither the one nor the other it was led by its very scruples to the solution embodied in the Treaty. And let it not be said that in order to avoid this difficulty it was sufficient to organize the plebiscite immediately: for beneath the weight of a century of Prussian oppression an immediate plebiscite would have been a vitiated plebiscite and the French of the Sarre would have been sacrificed. In their answer of June 16, 1919, to Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, the heads of the Allied Governments moreover rejected his pretensions in memorable terms:

"For the first time," they said, "since the annexation of this district to Prussia and to Bavaria, the people will live under a local Government which will have no other interest or concern than the

Digitized by Google

protection of their welfare. The Allied and Associated Powers have full confidence that the inhabitants will have no reason to regard the new administration as more remote than that of Berlin or Munich. Moreover, the system is temporary and at the end of fifteen years the inhabitants will have full and free right to choose the sovereignty under which they wish to live."

Such the solution furnished by the Treaty. Complex assuredly because the problem was complex—because France had to deal with Allies restrained by well-meaning hesitations and often incapable of grasping things from the same point of view as France, but just also because taking into account in this very complexity all the interests involved. At the beginning of July, 1919, the mayor of Sarrelouis accompanied by a delegation came to express to M. Clemenceau the gratitude of his fellow citizens. January 10, 1920, our mining engineers took possession of the coal basin. Some days later, the Government Commission presided over by a Frenchman, was installed at Sarrebruck and in several months did good and useful work for the inhabitants. It is this that should be retained by the opinion of our Allies who, to inform themselves, will attach more weight to the documents of which this chapter submits the testimony than to the captious protests of men who, so long as they believed themselves conquerors, intended to annex Belgium and five French Departments.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

WHAT GERMANY MUST PAY

To make certain her safety was the first duty of France. To secure reparation was her second. Duties common to all, it is true, but made peculiarly imperative to my country by the losses and suffering she had sustained.

Here, again, the interests of France were in accord with the general interest and with justice. Germany was doubly responsible for the destruction caused by the war; due first to her premeditated aggression and then made worse by her systematic savagery. War is an atrocious thing. Germany knew what she was doing when she unloosed it. But by her methods she made it more atrocious still. Cruel war on civilians to win quick victory was the doctrine of the German General Staff, often expounded *ex cathedra,* before Louvain and so many other cities had seen its hideous application. But cruel war for greater profits in peace time; cruel war that gold might be won by the sword was also the doctrine of German captains of industry in whose eyes the adversary of to-day was the competitor of to-morrow. Much of the destruction was systematically wrought, far from the front, in order to ruin permanently the occupied districts to the future advantage of German industry. This conception of war, enhancing the responsibility of the beaten aggressor, doubly justified full and complete reparation.

In the month of February, 1916, when Germany was expecting victory to result from her onslaught against Verdun, the Quartermaster General of the Imperial Armies sent to all the Chambers of Commerce, to all the financial, industrial and commercial associations of the Empire, a

Digitized by Google

book of 482 pages, with maps and charts, entitled: *Industry in Occupied France.* This work, prepared by two hundred reserve officers, chosen for their technical qualifications, described the state of destruction of each of our industries, at the time of publication. This destruction was of two kinds. The first and less important resulting from battle and bombardment; the second more frequent and more serious resulting from the organized pillage of factories and from the removal into Germany not only of their stocks of manufactured goods and raw material contained, but also of their machinery, their equipment and often even essential parts of their plants. The purpose of the book? "To give an idea of the resultant effects for Germany of the destruction of certain branches of French industry." For what object? To give German industry advance information of the markets in which it could replace us after the war and also, by a refined cynicism, to supply profitable customers in the persons of the factory owners robbed and despoiled by the German Army. Are examples wanted? Here are a few taken at random from this monstrous plan of brigandage.

Foundries. Production (and therefore receipts) will fall off heavily in these foundries, owing to the removal of the machinery.

This loss, which will be considerably increased by the cost of reconstruction, will so prejudice numerous enterprises, from the financial point of view, that it will be difficult for them to resume operation, or to restore this to its former level.

As regards steel mills, an indirect effect upon Germany is possible in this sense, that, owing to the considerable deterioration suffered by French locomotive works and car shops, French Railways will probably be obliged to buy their rolling stock in Germany, and the resulting orders will go to German plants.

Textile Mills. As all metals lacking in Germany, such as copper, brass, bronze, etc., have been seized and taken away from French factories....resumption of work will encounter great difficulties. An enormous market, especially for German manufacturers of textile machinery, will be found in the north of France.

Bleaching and Dyeing. All copper parts and leather belts have

Digitized by Google

been taken out and sent to Germany. An important outlet is thus made for German machine manufacturers.

Woolen Mills. In the factories almost all the copper boiler parts have been removed, as well as all leather belting. Electric wiring has been taken out in many factories. The small electric motors will be removed between now and the end of the war. In the region of Avesnes and of Sedan, several factories have been so gutted that a certain number of their looms, abandoned to the weather, may be looked upon as scrap iron.

To what extent will the continuation of economic war after peace is declared prevent France's recovering the advantage now possessed by Germany who has suffered practically no destruction from the war? This is a question that German industry will have to study.

Germany should be in a position to resume her full productive capacity in the manufacture of yarn at least one or two years sooner than France. This result will be all the more satisfactory in that the sister industries of weaving and dyeing, as well as the export trade, will benefit equally thereby, and that this last, especially, will be in a position, not only to recapture the markets it has lost, but even to acquire new ones where France so far has been the only furnisher.

Ceramic Industry. Attention is drawn to considerable war damages in the destruction and requisition on a large scale of electric installations and wiring.

The German machine makers should find in this field a good opportunity after the war of selling their wares.

By properly directed effort, Germany should succeed in capturing the few French foreign markets, notably in Turkey and the Balkan States. The long stoppage of work in the French factories, and their inability to manufacture and export immediately after the war should contribute to this.

Sugar Industry. The French refineries, with a few rare exceptions, have suffered greatly from the war. None of them has escaped requisitions. Everywhere their stocks of sugar, of treacle, their provisions of coal, coke and petroleum, rubber and leather belting, live stock, consisting of horses, oxen, etc., carts, harness, implements, narrow gauge railways, patent trucks and electric wiring have been removed, and in only a few shops, four or six, now working for the Germans—has indispensable equipment been left.

Digitized by Google

But the damage done to the refineries themselves and their equipment is even more serious.

Lack of superintendence, occupation by troops, removal of the above mentioned objects, have already caused great damage; but the refineries have suffered still more from the taking out of all copper, brass and bronze appliances.

War wastage has caused such damage to whole series of refineries that their reconstruction would be impossible. Even those that survive, in a more or less damaged condition, will long feel the disastrous effects of the war. The French sugar industry should disappear as a competitor on the world market during the next two or three years. It will, at the start, scarcely suffice to supply the country's own needs and to replenish exhausted stocks. To a certain extent, it will be obliged to have recourse to special German factories for purposes of reconstruction; for the French machine shops situated for the most part in the North and reduced in their productive capacity by the war, will be inadequate for this task.

Leather Industry. French competition will be unable to make itself felt for eighteen months. German industry can find a considerable market for several years in the North of France and assure itself, for the future, important outlet, formerly monopolized by French products in Asia Minor and European Turkey.

Coal Mines. The districts will be unproductive for years to come, owing to the removal of the machinery and the flooding of the shafts.

France will have to buy her machinery in Germany and, even if the rich beds in the French territory occupied by the German troops were to continue in the possession of France, it might be foreseen that Germany would have to deliver a higher percentage than in the past, owing to the deficit in French production.

Breweries. Breweries have suffered heavy damages owing to the removal of all articles of brass and copper. Those only have been preserved which have made beer for the troops, and they have been operated by the Army as military breweries. Their number is not large.

The brewing industry in the occupied territory may be regarded, for the greater part, as annihilated. Certain brewers, who were among the most prosperous, will need at least two years to restore their plants, even if they replace in part the copper by iron.

A large part of the orders will come to the German machine makers, if they can promise quicker delivery than their English and American competitors.

Digitized by Google

Paper Industry. The damage caused by the war to the plants and the buildings in the paper industry is considerable, as important copper piping has been removed, as well as brass forms and cylinders which it will be difficult to replace after the war.

For example: In the paper mills of Bousbecque alone, nearly ninety tons of wrought copper have been taken out.

German machine makers who, before the war, found in the paper industry a very important outlet for their product, must strive to secure the work of reconstructing these mills, in order to eliminate the inevitable competition, especially from America. American machines would otherwise easily install themselves in this industry, from which, afterwards, it would be difficult to drive them out.

The Cotton Industry. In the occupied territory the greater number of the spindles and bobbins will be able to operate only six or eight months after the corresponding German industry has started working again.

These quotations are tragically enlightening. The damage sustained by French industry, object of this inquiry, interests German leaders only in the measure of its beneficial effects upon corresponding branches of German activity. To the Army—which does its work conscientiously—the task of destroying capital and throwing labour out of work; to the business men the task of getting the most out of it either by the conquest of markets formerly held by France, or by the sale to French pre-war competitors of machinery and implements which the German troops had stolen from them! This confidential document, which M. Klotz laid before the Supreme Council in February, 1919, is not only indicative of an amazing psychology, it is the necessary preface to any study of reparations. In the case of Germany, we are confronted not only by the inevitable desolation and ruin of war, not only by the responsibilities of a war of aggression, but by intentional and methodical destruction. Germany killed not only to conquer, but for profit. Beaten, she has to pay. Such the verdict of Versailles.

The verdict was known in advance and astonished no one. All the declarations of the Allies, all the votes of their

Digitized by Google

Parliaments, all the messages of President Wilson, all the speeches of M. Clemenceau and of Mr. Lloyd George, finally all the accepted bases of the peace, had laid down the Allied programme in perfect accord with the dictates of their conscience. On the principle, there was no disagreement; but in its application this stupendous problem calling from destroyed towns and devastated fields for billions involved difficulties such as no political assembly had ever before met or solved.

II

At the end of January, 1919, a special Commission is created by the Supreme Council to study the problem. It comprises the highest financial authorities of the victorious countries. At its very first meeting, it frankly propounds the fundamental question: "What is Germany to pay?"

I recall the legal bases of the question. These bases were embodied not only in the general rules of international law, but also in the diplomatic correspondence which had preceded the Armistice of November 11, 1918. This correspondence had both defined the necessary conditions of an Armistice, the study and framing of which had been intrusted to Marshal Foch and the general bases of peace laid down in President Wilson's message on January 8, 1918, which in turn accorded with the declarations of the European Governments, dated December 31, 1916, and January 10, 1917. Concerning reparations the important passage is found in Mr. Lansing's telegram of November 5, 1918. It is worded as follows:

> When the President formulated his peace conditions in his address to Congress on January 8, last, he declared that the invaded territories must be not only evacuated and liberated, but restored. The Allies think that no doubt should be left as to what this stipulation means. They understand by it that compensation will be made by Germany for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea, and from the air. The President is in agreement with this interpretation.

Digitized by Google

Furthermore during the meetings held on October 31 and November 1, 2, and 4, 1918, by the Supreme Council of the Allies for the final drafting of the Armistice clauses, M. Klotz, Minister of Finance, had said:

"It would be prudent to preface the financial questions, in the Armistice itself, with an explicit reservation of all future claims of the Allies, and I propose the following text: 'With the reservation that any subsequent claims by the Allies and the United States of America remain unaffected, reparation for damage done.' "

M. Klotz's proposal was read a first time on November 2 and on the fourth it was finally adopted. These were the two texts which might guide the Commission in its work.

The meeting of February 10 showed that these texts had given rise to two contradictory interpretations. One was put forward by all the Powers represented, with a single exception; the other, by the delegate of the United States. The views of the majority found an admirable interpreter in Great Britain's principal delegate to the Commission, Mr. Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia, a little man, deaf, impetuous, clear-minded, a blunt and aggressive orator. This view was that Germany, without exception or reserve, should reimburse *all* the costs of the war, including damage to persons and property, and war expenditures.

"The right to reparation," he declared, "rests upon the principle of justice, pure and simple, in this sense that, where damage or harm has been done, the doer should make it good to the extreme limit of his resources. This principle is universally recognized by all laws.

"This principle demands that the sum total of the cost of the war should be borne by the enemy nations....From the points of view of both logic and justice, it is absolutely impossible to distinguish between the claim to the right for restoration in the devastated regions, and the claim for damages in general....Those who have mortgaged all they possess in order to free Belgium, have suffered from Germany as much as Belgium herself.

Digitized by Google

"Let us take the case of Australia. She has lost nearly 60,000 killed, and about 190,000 mutilated or infirm for life. Her war debt is 300,000,000 pounds, or 7,500 million francs gold, a crushing burden for a nation of five million inhabitants. It may be that so far as civilian life and property are concerned, my countrymen have not endured actual sufferings; but the sacrifices they have made and the damage they have suffered, are no less great. Full and complete compensation is due to them as to all other Allies.

"The house or the factory of the Belgian is in ruins. The Englishman's is mortgaged for war expenditure. The damage to him is quite as real, quite as great, quite as direct. Germany owes Great Britain reparation for war costs as unquestionably as she owes reparation to Belgium for the ravages she has committed."

To these general arguments of equity, Lord Sumner, the second British delegate, added legal reasons borrowed from international custom and from the text of the Armistice. He recalled that war costs had been demanded by the Allied Powers from France in 1815 (700 millions); by Austria from Sardinia in 1849 (25 millions); by Prussia from Austria in 1866 (40 millions); by Prussia from France in 1871 (5,000 millions). He added:

"The reimbursement of war costs is the constant practice of international law.... No particular clause, either in the Fourteen Points or in the Armistice, excludes this reimbursement."

The American Counsel, Mr. J. F. Dulles, a clear and forceful logician, did not of course deny any of Germany's responsibilities, but, as a lawyer, he declared that he was dealing with a contract which, in his opinion, limited the right of the Allies to claim anything beyond reparation for all acts committed in violation of international laws and for direct damages suffered by the civilian population. He said:

"The American delegation associates itself absolutely and without reserve with all that has been said concerning the enormity of the crime committed by Germany. Besides, the United States have their war debt also, constituting a

Digitized by Google

terrible burden. So as it is in accord with our inmost feelings that the principles of reparation should be severe, and with our national interest that these principles should be given the widest scope, why is it that we propose only a limited reparation?

"It is because we are not facing a blank page, but a page covered with a document at the foot of which are the signatures of Mr. Wilson, M. Clemenceau, M. Orlando and Mr. Lloyd George.

"The proposal of the United States is therefore that we demand from Germany full reparations, but only those stipulated in the contract with Germany concerning the conditions on which peace could be signed.

"Accordingly, first comes reparation for acts which constitute an obvious violation of international law. This, therefore, implies complete reparation for Belgium.

"Then, restoration of the invaded regions, and reparation for damage done to the civilian population and its property."

To this argument, M. Klotz who, as President of the Commission, was the last to speak, forcefully opposed an argument of fact and of law which, without convincing Mr. Dulles, made a great impression upon all his colleagues.

"You speak of a contract," he said. "For my part, I know only of one—signed by the Allies and by Germany—that is the Armistice. Well, I read in that: 'With the reservation that any subsequent claims of the Allies and the United States of America remain unaffected, reparation for damage done.' It was I who asked for the insertion of that clause. All the delegates accepted it. Its meaning is clear.

"I conclude therefore, first, that there exists no contract under the terms of which reimbursement of war costs was renounced, and second, that there is in the Armistice a contract according to the terms of which the right to reimbursement has been expressly reserved."

A long discussion brought additional arguments to strengthen M. Klotz's contention. I will quote only the

Digitized by Google

principal ones. M. Chiesa, the Italian delegate, drew attention to the fact that, inasmuch as Mr. Lansing's note referred to "all" the damage caused the civilian population, this definition covered the war costs and indirect damage, as well as direct damages. M. Mori, the Japanese delegate, added: "The question before us is the same as that of the costs in a lawsuit. The sum total of the costs of the war must be paid by the aggressor." M. Proutich, the Serbian delegate, drew attention to the fact that the Fourteen Points applied only to Germany, not to the other belligerents. M. Loucheur ended his summing up of the discussion with the words: "No indemnity" did not mean "no reimbursement for war expenses." Mr. Hughes asserted that, since the violation of Belgian neutrality created, as the Americans themselves admitted, Belgium's right to total reparation, the same right existed for the guarantor Powers, obliged, under the Treaty of 1839, to defend Belgian neutrality. Mr. Dulles replied to each of these different arguments in turn. He insisted especially upon that of M. Klotz, asserting that the diplomatic correspondence of October, 1918, referred not to the bases of the Armistice but to those of the peace; that, accordingly, it bound the Conference, charged with the elaboration not of the Armistice, but of peace; furthermore the Armistice, whatever its wording, could change nothing in the accepted bases of the peace.... As no agreement was reached, it was decided to ask the heads of the Governments for their interpretation, and the meeting was adjourned.

After the legal aspect, so full of fine points, let us consider the facts which had also to be weighed. The demand for full and complete reparation presented by M. Klotz and Mr. Hughes had justice on its side. Moreover, it had held so large a place in the English elections of December, 1918, that it was politically impossible for Mr. Lloyd George to abandon it; and so long as Great Britain supported this claim all the other Governments—especially those of countries which had suffered most from the war—were bound to stand by her to avoid being overwhelmed by

Digitized by Google

abuse. It is certain, however, that looking at the problem as a whole, this total demand led to actual figures, the very magnitude of which was absurd and in the special cases of some countries it also led to results contrary to what had been expected.

The amounts to be demanded from Germany for damage done to persons and property, reached the sum of about 350,000 million. For the Allies as a whole the war costs on the other hand amounted to 700,000 million francs. The following table gives an approximate estimate:

	In thousand of million francs	
Great Britain	190	27.1%
United States	160	22.8%
France	143	20.1%
Russia	92	12.9%
Italy	65	9.2%
Belgium, Serbia, Roumania, Greece	53	7.8%
Total	703	99.9%

The figures revealed that, if we were to insist upon the three claims—damage to property, damage to persons, war expenses—we would reach a total capital of 1,000 thousand millions, the payment of which over a period of fifty years would represent taking into account interest and sinking fund more than 3,000 thousand millions, a sum so great that it is unreal. If, faithful to this reasoning as logic demanded, we had demanded also on the ground of full and complete reparation and in accordance with full justice payment of indirect damages, loss in operation, loss of profits, etc..... we should perhaps have reached some such fabulous total as 7,000, 8,000 or 10,000 billions. It was clear that, if the Conference was to get practical results, it would have to move only with extreme prudence.

At this time also certain delegates began to be worried by the thought of surprises awaiting the countries they rep-

Digitized by Google

resented. Belgium's first delegate to the Commission, M. Van den Heuvel, had not hesitated to show his uneasiness. He said:

"Everybody recognizes Belgium's right to total reparation, because her neutrality was violated. But, as a matter of fact, what will this right amount to, if we accept the English view of full and complete reparation for everyone? What will really happen? The total will inevitably be enormous. Consequently it will be necessary to reduce all the debts proportionately, as is done in a case of bankruptcy. Then the claims of the small Powers will never be paid in full."

Mr. Dulles, taking advantage of this remark, immediately added:

"The American proposals are those which, if not in principle, at least in practice, will ensure the maximum of reparations and their most equitable distribution. To demand the whole gigantic total of the war costs—I agree with M. Van den Heuvel—will endanger the accomplishment of the precise reparation to be fulfilled by Germany, and to which she is compelled to recognize that she must submit and which will absorb her resources to the utmost limit."

The French representatives could but listen to these words with the most serious attention. For examination of the figures established the fact that, as far as France was concerned, they expressed an unquestionable truth. Among the claimants, France headed the list with respect to damages to persons and property. Out of every hundred francs paid by Germany under these two heads France considered that she had a right—proved by the actual figures—to sixty-five, the other Powers getting thirty-five. But under the head of war costs, out of every one hundred francs received, we had a right to only twenty and the others to eighty. Combine these two propositions, you will see that, if the war costs were not exacted, France could claim sixty-five per cent. of the sum paid by Germany, while if they were, she could get only forty-two and five-

Digitized by Google

tenths per cent. Our interest—owing on the one hand to the danger of an excessive total, on the other to the play of percentages—was thus to demand, in opposition to the American point of view, damages for pensions in addition to property damages but, in accordance with that point of view, to leave aside war costs which ranked us lower among the Allies than the two other classifications.

This was the solution urged by the French delegation during March upon the heads of the Governments, and this also was the solution decided upon at the end of the month. From then on the discussion was rather one of form than of substance, rather political than financial. The Americans had made a thoroughly just concession to Franco-British demands by adding pensions to damages to persons and property and agreeing that deaths and wounds should be considered as injuries suffered by families, whose resources were lessened by the loss or incapacity of their members. This done, they were ready to write purely and simply in the Treaty: "Germany shall reimburse damages and pensions." The British and the French in fundamental agreement with this asked, however, that for political and moral reasons something further be added. They wanted the Treaty to make clear in law Germany's total responsibility for all the expenses of the war. They wanted it to make clear by specific declaration that, if full and complete reparation were not demanded, it was only because of material impossibility. They wanted this impossibility to be set forth in such manner as not to shock public opinion, ill-informed, as one may imagine, as to the statistical facts. Mr. Lloyd George insisted:

"We must not take out of our draft some indication of the enemy's incapacity to pay all he owes. We must in some way justify the action of the British and French Governments, which find themselves obliged to accept less than the full payment of war costs. We must make it thoroughly clear that, if we do not exact it, it is not because it would be unjust to claim it, but because it would be impossible to obtain it.

Digitized by Google

"Our public opinion requires reparation as complete as possible. I have communicated to M. Clemenceau a report of a debate upon this question in the House of Commons and it gave him some idea of the violence of the sentiments expressed there. Mr. Bonar Law wrote me after this debate that Parliament had shown itself ill satisfied with his statement."

And M. Clemenceau added:

"It is a question of wording. But I agree with you that it is important to say that our right to compensation is not limited, and that it is we ourselves who, in view of what is possible, have fixed a limit."

It was thus that agreement was reached, in the course of two meetings, on the text of Articles 231 and 232 of the Treaty.* These articles have often been misunderstood and their apparent contradiction has been bitterly criticized. The above should dispel all possible misconception.

If it had been a question of principle only, it is abundantly clear that in equity neither France nor any of the Allies should have borne a cent of the war costs. But it was a question of political realities and possibilities, not a question of ideals. We were bound first to remember that the American delegation, whose approval was necessary, refused absolutely to claim the war costs; then that if war costs were claimed, we should arrive at a total of more than a thousand thousand millions, obviously irrecoverable; finally that pro-rata distribution would have given France only forty-two per cent. instead of the sixty-five

*Article 231. The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.

Article 232. The Allied and Associated Governments recognize that the resources of Germany are not adequate, after taking into account permanent diminutions of such resources which will result from other provisions of the present Treaty, to make complete reparation for all such loss and damage.

The Allied and Associated Governments, however, require, and Germany undertakes, that she will make compensation for all damage done to the civilian population of the Allied and Associated Powers and to their property during the period of the belligerency of each as an Allied or Associated Power against Germany by such aggression by land, by sea and from the air, *and in general all damage as defined in Annex I hereto.*

Digitized by Google

per cent. she had a right to demand under the head of damages and pensions. In the necessary and inevitable imperfection of solutions, the one which the French delegates put through was unquestionably the best, and we can say, as did M. Barthou in his report on the Treaty, that by exacting from Germany the full and complete repayment of damages and pensions, the "Peace Conference, all things considered, handled the matter well."

III

We now knew under what heads we could claim from Germany. It remained to fix the amounts we could claim. The damages subject to reparation had been defined. It was now necessary to calculate the amount of these damages, a difficult task indeed for so soon after the Armistice an exact estimate of the devastation was virtually impossible.

This impossibility, combined with the legitimate desire to make the Treaty as definite as possible, suggested as no exact estimate was forthcoming the statement of a lump sum. This solution at first sight offered attractive advantages. The creditors would know at once the sum total they were to receive. The debtors would know the sum total they were to pay. The credit bond, if all agreed to discount it, would be immediately negotiable. Such a sum once established there would be no further difficulties, either for the Governments or for the Reparations Commission save that, which under this plan or under any other remained the essential difficulty—Germany, forced to accept a system of annuities, might some day refuse to pay.

To these arguments of convenience, the French delegation without ever wavering, always opposed, throughout the six months the Peace Conference lasted, the arguments of law and justice which were finally embodied in the Treaty. It was its duty to take this stand, first to give effect to one of the most frequently declared war aims of France (Notes of December 30, 1916, and January 10, 1917,

Digitized by Google

resolutions of the Chamber and Senate of June 5 and 6 following, meeting at Versailles of October 31, 1918, and finally the Armistice itself). It was its duty, because the lump sum by its very principal excluded that full and complete reparation for damages, the perfect right of France to which no one had ever contested. Again, it was its duty because the lump sum by its modalities, and everyone of them was minutely discussed, led to an inadmissible reduction in our rights, and because this reduction once obtained Germany alone, and not France, would have benefited from the potentialities of economic improvement the future might hold.

For these reasons, which are decisive, France, in 1919, refused the lump sum. She refused to fix the amount of Germany's debt summarily and at random. She refused to accept as the basis of this debt—the inevitable result of a lump sum—Germany's present capacity of payment. She refused to give up her right to full and complete reparation for all the destruction to life and property caused by Germany. She refused to choose for fixing the German debt the moment when Germany is at her lowest. She wanted to reserve to the victims the future benefit that would accrue from the possible revival of the aggressor. These principles permeate the whole Treaty and it is right that they should.

In January, 1919, the discussion had begun in the Technical Commissions. These latter hesitated before the heavy responsibilities to be incurred and reserved decision on all the essential points. In March and April, the matter passed to a smaller committee, upon which M. Klotz and M. Loucheur represented France, and to the Council of the heads of Governments. Several hundred meetings were held, both day and night. The question of the lump sum, with two or three others, absorbed the greater part of this effort. On March 26, at a meeting of the Council of Four, M. Loucheur presented the problem. Up to the very last our three representatives held together to obtain a settlement that did justice to France. M. Loucheur said:

Digitized by Google

"I must repeat emphatically that the lump sum offered us is not sufficient to repair all the damage done to persons and property. What becomes of the pledges we have given? What will our people say?

"France has a right—solemnly recognized even before the signing of the Armistice—to full reparation for her sufferings and her sacrifices. What I ask is that the Treaty shall record this right. If I acted otherwise, I should be acting against the interests and rights of my country.

"I do not fear a public discussion. No one to-day can make an absolutely certain estimate of the total of the reparations due. That is an easy matter for ships which have been sunk. It is much more difficult when dealing with a region entirely ruined and devastated."

And, the same day, M. Clemenceau declared:

"I cannot forget the document we signed on November 4, 1918, and sent to President Wilson on the subject of reparation for war damages."

On March 28, the discussion continues and in a long statement, our Minister of Finance defends the plan presented by the French delegation. He summarizes it thus:

"The Germans are obliged and have pledged themselves to repair the damages. We do not know to-day what such reparation will cost. Improvised estimates would be imprudent. The only system is the following: The Reparations Commission will fix the amount—when it has all the facts. Then according to the amount of the debt thus ascertained, it will settle the figure of the annuities and the length of payment."

The French contention is so strong that, at this meeting, Mr. Lloyd George recognizes it is preferable not to fix any figure in the Treaty. But the American experts hold to the lump sum and repeat in its favour all the arguments that France had just refuted. On April 3, 4, 6, and 7, the two contentions continue to be opposed. It is objected that, under our system, the payments would extend over more than a generation. We reply that this is not certain and

Digitized by Google

that even if it were so, it is just to inflict this burden upon Germany rather than upon France. Minimum and maximum amounts are suggested. We reply that our damages were not matters for bargaining, and that it is their real and not their approximate amount which must be reimbursed us. M. Clemenceau brings the final argument:

"It must be made plain that Germany recognizes the full amount of her debt. It is not enough to say that we recognize it.

"I demand, in the name of the French Government, and after consultation with my colleagues, that the Treaty fix what Germany owes us, by specifying the damages for which reparation is due to us.

"We will fix a period of thirty years, if you wish it, and we will give the Commission, after it has calculated the amount of the debt, the mission of obtaining payment in these thirty years of all that Germany owes. If that is found to be impossible, the Commission will have the right to prolong the payments beyond thirty years.

"In no case will I agree to allow either the Treaty or the Commission to fix an amount below what is due us. Such settlements are haphazard and the burden of them would fall upon France. I repeat in no case will I be able to subscribe to them."

From that day on, our success takes shape and agreement is reached within a week. If it were necessary to add the justification of facts to the reasons of principle advanced by the French delegation, it would suffice to recall the amount of the lump sums proposed by our opponents: 125 thousand millions for the Allies as a whole. France's share, under this system, would have been approximately sixty thousand millions. Now the minimum estimate of our damages was at least 125 thousand millions and the capital of our pensions represented fifty thousand millions.* If

*The valuation, according to the terms of the Treaty, must be made in accordance with the cost of reconstruction, which, since the Armistice, has constantly increased. The French Government, in July, 1920, supplied the following approximate values: damages one hundred and fifty-two thousand millions; pensions fifty-eight thousand millions. See Chapter XII, page 396, for the evaluation of December, 1920.

Digitized by Google

then we had yielded, we should have accepted less than half of our minimum rights. That is what M. Clemenceau would never consent to.

On May 7, the Treaty was handed to the German delegation. Article 232 embodied the French contention accepted by the Allies. On May 29, Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau presented his answer. He, too, preferred the lump sum, but the figure he suggested was still inferior to those we had rejected; 100 thousand million gold marks, of which twenty thousand millions, were to be paid before May 1, 1926, the rest in annual installments calculated *pro rata* of the German budget, and payable, without interest, in fifty or sixty years, the actual value of which at six per cent. represented only about thirty thousand millions.

I have told, in connection with the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, the serious crisis through which the Conference passed at that time. On all sides the question was asked: "Will they sign?" Yet as to how they were to be made to sign there was no agreement. Some, like Mr. Lloyd George, wanted to make concessions; others, like M. Clemenceau, insisted on adhering to the verdict rendered. Like all the great problems of the peace, that of the reparations came up again for re-examination. Like them, it led to further discussions, closer, more intense, more thrilling than the first. During the first days of June, Mr. Lloyd George said that the members of his Cabinet were all of the opinion that we were asking Germany for more than she could pay. He added that the sharpest criticism was directed against the unlimited and undefined character of the debt imposed upon the vanquished. So he asked for a thoroughgoing revision of the Reparations Clauses, and inclined under the influence of Mr. Keynes to the lump sum proposed in March by the American experts. M. Clemenceau answered by a formal refusal.

"Like you," he declared, "I am advised as to public opinion in my country and I must take it into consideration. French opinion believes that the Treaty does not exact from Germany from the financial point of view all that it ought.

Digitized by Google

France is the country that has suffered most from the war and she is convicted to-day that we are not asking enough from Germany. This conviction finds expression in the speeches of eminent and moderate men, like M. Ribot and M. Millies-Lacroix.

"You must understand this state of mind. British opinion does not complain because Germany has to give all her colonies and all her fleet. This is natural, for each nation sees the question from its own point of view. A feeling no less natural in France will be that British critics occupy themselves too exclusively with continental questions."

This first effort was not sufficient. For although President Wilson, on all questions like disarmament and the left bank of the Rhine, shows himself in favour of the firm policy, advocated by M. Clemenceau, he was, on the contrary, influenced in the financial problem by his technical advisers who were anxious, above all, to reach a quick solution. He recalls this by declaring:

"You know that for practical reasons the American experts have always favoured a sum to be fixed immediately."

So he finds himself in agreement with Mr. Lloyd George in believing that "so long as the Germans remain in complete uncertainty as to their obligations, they will be unable to find any foreign credit." This objection is not so sound as it seemed, for according to the terms of the Treaty itself Germany's debt has to be completely established before May 1, 1921. So now M. Clemenceau is all alone, and not once, but several times he has to return to the attack.

"The proposal of the American experts," he said, "would destroy the Treaty. We have in the very first lines of the chapter on reparations laid down the principle that the damages enumerated in the annex must be repaired. If we fix a lump sum to-day how can we tell whether it will suffice to pay us? France has suffered too much to allow this question to go by the board."

Digitized by Google

The objection was so sound that President Wilson is brought around by it. He declares:

"I must remind you that the United States has not the slightest intention of proposing concessions to Germany. We have simply endeavoured to do our share of the common work and to hasten the signing. If the proposals made displease you, they will be withdrawn."

From that moment the case is won. Mr. Lloyd George himself loyally admits the manifest inadequacy of the lump sums proposed and fearing that a higher figure in the Treaty would prevent Germany from signing returns willingly to the original wording which at first he had regretted and shows less alarm at its lack of precision. It is decided to retain it. The only amendment introduced, not in the Treaty but in the answer to the Germans, consists in authorizing them to make proposals within two months after the Treaty comes in force, that without changing anything in the principle or in the consequences of Article 232, would tend to accelerate the settlement either of the amount due or the manner of its payment. On June 9, Mr. Keynes resigns as financial counsellor of the British delegation, which loses in him an abundant advocate of all the German contentions. On June 10, agreement is reached. On June 16, the Allies' answer is handed to Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau.

It is important, now that risky and improvised suggestions are being made for the revision of the Treaty, to read over this document drawn up by an Englishman, approved by all the Governments and signed by M. Clemenceau. The justification of the course decided upon is written all over it.

The Allies' proposals confine the amount payable by Germany to what is clearly justifiable under the terms of Armistice in respect of damage caused to the civilian population of the Allies by German aggression.

It is not possible to fix this sum to-day for the extent of damage and the cost of repair has not yet been ascertained.

The Allied and Associated Governments, consistently with their

Digitized by Google

policy already expressed, decline to enter into a discussion of the principles underlying the reparation clauses.

The categories of damages and the reparation clauses must be accepted by the German authorities as matters settled beyond discussion.

So far as the substance of the German counter-proposals is concerned, the answer was no less clear, no less firm:

A sum of one hundred billion gold marks is indeed mentioned, and this is calculated to give the impression of an extensive offer, which upon examination it proves not to be.

No interest is to be paid at all.

The present value of this distant prospect is small, but it is all that Germany tenders to the victims of her aggression in satisfaction for their part suffering and their permanent burdens.

Germany, unquestionably, will have a heavy burden to bear. But why? The Allied and Associated Governments wish Germany to be able to enjoy the prosperity like the rest of the world, though much of the fruit of it must necessarily go, for many years to come, in making reparation to her neighbors for the damage she has done.

If the Treaty were different, if it were based upon a general condonation of the events of 1914-1918, it would not be a peace of justice.

Repeated assertion of Germany's full and complete obligation with regard to all categories of damages enumerated in Article 232 and Annex 1; fixation of the total amount of the German debt on May 1, 1921, at the latest; maintenance of all the principles and of all the methods urged by the French delegation from the beginning of January until the end of June,—such was the final decision, the strict justice of which cannot be disputed if reference be had to the principles which inspired the peace. It is indeed objected that, if the solution is just, it is also unrealizable. It is said that Germany will not pay, and the Conference has been accused of never having concerned itself with Germany's capacity for payment. This is the second position taken up by Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau and is no better than the first.

Digitized by Google

IV

The Peace Conference did not merely make generous allowance for Germany's situation and her capacity of payment by letting her off repayment of war costs at the suggestion of the American delegation, thus reducing her debt by 700 thousand millions, more than two-thirds of the total. It also made a careful study of the resources with which Germany could pay.

At its first meeting, on February 3, 1919, the Commission appointed by the Supreme Council to study the problem of reparations, created three sub-commissions. One was to take up the amount of the damages; another, the financial guarantees of execution; the third, capacity and means of payment. The latter sub-commission held thirty-two meetings and minutely analyzed Germany's actual and potential resources. Its president, Lord Cunliffe, never ceased to express the opinion, shared by all who know and think that, for a payment distributed over a sufficient period—fifty years for instance—Germany will have resources infinitely superior to those that any examination of her situation immediately after the war would make it possible to declare or to anticipate. The war itself furnished the proof. Who would have foreseen that, either in the Allied camp or in the other, it would be possible for fifty-two long months to meet expenses exceeding 1,000 thousand millions? M. Loucheur, agreeing with Lord Cunliffe, confirmed this proof by recalling Germany's prodigious development from 1871 to 1914—her population increasing by fifty-two per cent., her production of coal increasing from forty million tons to 280 million. Other delegates showed that Germany, on the eve of war, was less burdened with taxes than any other country; Austria-Hungary paying 106 francs per head of her inhabitants; France, 100; England, 79; Italy, 62.50; Germany, only 54. Others again recalled that immediately after the Treaty of Frankfort, France in a few weeks had increased her taxes by nearly one billion and Lord Cunliffe, after a long discussion, summed up the general opinion by saying:

Digitized by Google

"Germany's ability to pay exceeds anything shown by our study. What Germany does not pay, the Allies, attacked by her, will have to pay."

These principles once laid down, the means of payment were examined. Everyone was agreed that the medium should be gold marks. Every one agreed also with M. Loucheur that the only way of finding gold marks was, by means of the Treaty, *to impose upon Germany the obligation to export.* Coal exports were naturally put in first place and it was estimated that they might attain sixty million tons a year. After a long discussion, the following means of payment were adopted by the sub-commission: gold and silver on hand, German investments in foreign countries, coal, potash, wood, colouring matters, ships already launched and those under construction, machinery, furniture, cattle, chemical products, submarine cables. Increased taxation and the creation of monopolies were also studied—a Frenchman, M. Raphael Georges Levy, anticipating from the former an increase of revenue amounting to five thousand million marks, while a Serbian expert thought the latter would give more than four billion. The sub-commission was of opinion, however, that it ought to enter upon this course with extreme prudence for two reasons: the first was that, if the Allies attempted to impose fiscal reforms upon Germany, the latter would always answer that these reforms were badly conceived; the second, that the increased revenues thus obtained would be in paper marks; of greatly depreciated value as compared to gold marks.

The report of the sub-commission, handed in on April 18, was divided into two parts. The first presented figures. The second did not. The sub-commission declared that within eighteen months of the conclusion of peace Germany could pay twenty thousand million gold marks in money or in kind. For the rest, the sub-commission confined itself to formulating the means of payment it proposed to adopt especially exports to be imposed upon Germany in order to provide the gold payments which it thought "*ought to be*

Digitized by Google

very considerable and increase progressively." It recommended that, once the amount of the debt was fixed, an Inter-allied Commission should determine each year the payments for that year, as annuities fixed in advance for a period of fifty years could only be arbitrary. Germany to meet these obligations would have to increase her pre-war exports, and for that to practise a policy of restriction, transforming herself into "an exporting nation with a view to paying her debts of reparation." The sub-commission concluded:

> The sub-Commission deems it wiser to fix a figure which may appear somewhat excessive compared to the resources of the enemy countries rather than to run the risk of indicating a sum clearly inferior to what these countries can pay without any extraordinary effort.
>
> It is important to recall that the productive forces of a nation may, thanks to scientific progress, increase much more rapidly than can be thought possible.
>
> Figures which, to-day, may appear out of all proportion, will perhaps seem quite moderate in twenty or thirty years. During the last fifty years in Germany, the production of steel increased twelvefold; the number of workmen employed in mechanical industries has increased fivefold, the number of miles of railway has tripled, and exports have increased fivefold.

It may not be amiss to add that the above report was drawn up by the late Lord Cunliffe, the British representative and Governor of the Bank of England.

The special committee appointed at the end of March to draft the reparation clauses tried first to do what the sub-commission had not done and to reduce Germany's payments to figures. But it did not succeed, first because the matter itself precluded mathematical certainties, and conflicting opinions were backed by no decisive proofs; because also whatever the results, some feared a figure so stupendous that it would encourage Germany not to sign; others one so moderate that it would rouse the indignation of the ruined populations. Everyone agreed that immediately after the coming into force of the Treaty Germany

Digitized by Google

could pay twenty-five thousand million gold francs. But unanimity ended there.

As an instance, I will recall that the American experts considered the following as the maximum payments possible:

Payments before 1921.....	20	thousand	million	gold	marks
Payments from 1922 to 1931....	60	"	"	"	"
Payments from 1932 to 1941....	80	"	"	"	"
Payments from 1942 to 1951....100		"	"	"	"
Total 260		"	"	"	"

The total of these payments, allowing for interest, represented at current rates, a present value of 140 thousand million gold marks.* France and Great Britain deemed it impossible to go below 180 thousand million marks gold of the value mentioned, and this would require total installments of 367 thousand million marks gold, or, in fifty years, eighty-seven thousand million marks gold more

*In connection with these figures I desire to make once for all two very important remarks.

1° When discussing the annuities to be paid by Germany, it is most important always to bear in mind this idea of "present value." The Allies have an immediate need of money. What interests them is the amount to be received or to be minted in the near future. Thus defined, the present value of a series of annuities is very inferior to the arithmetical sum of these annuities, and the longer the duration, the greater difference becomes. If, for example, we consider a series of annuities of ten thousand millions, their arithmetical calculation gives, for twenty-five years, 250 thousand millions. But their present value, on the basis of a rate of interest of five per cent. represents only 140 thousand millions, because we must take into account the interest. For fifty years, the arithmetical total would be 500 thousand millions, but the present value would be only 182. For one hundred years, the difference is greater still. The arithmetical total is 1,000 thousand millions; the present value only 198.

2° The fact that Allied claims are expressed in national currency at current rates and the German debt in marks gold should not be allowed to create any illusion as to the possibility of utilizing exchange fluctuations in order to reduce the German debt. As a matter of fact, the payment will be spread over a long period of forty or fifty years. On the one hand, the exchange difficulties (especially in the case of France whose commercial balance is improving from month to month) is only temporary. On the other hand, and this is even more important, the payment by Germany of even a part of her debt, say 30,000 millions in marks gold, would immediately result in bringing back exchange to par. The advantages which some seem to have expected,—especially at the Boulogne Conference of June, 1920—from the fixation of the amount of the debt in gold and of the amount of the claims in national paper currency, would thus be insignificant and do not need to be taken into account.

Digitized by Google

than the American proposal contemplated. This was how the problem stood when it came before the Council of Four.

The state of mind of our Allies was anxious and contradictory. Mr. Lloyd George declared:

"We are going to throw Germany into the arms of the Bolsheviks. Besides, for her to pay the sum which we have in mind, and which it is just she should pay, she would have to occupy a still greater place in the markets than before the war. Is that to our interest?"

President Wilson wanted Germany to pay all she owed. But he also felt an apprehension which was very widespread at that time and which retrospective criticism takes sufficiently into account. This was that the German Government might fall and when the time came to sign there might be nobody in Germany to do so. Besides the American experts, having been unable to obtain from the European Allies who had not yet estimated it, the total amount of damages, had reversed their efforts and sought to form an estimate of Germany's capacity for payment. Mr. Keynes encouraged them with his habitual spite and as, in March, 1919, this capacity naturally presented itself under the most sombre aspect, their conclusions tended to diverge from ours.

M. Clemenceau protested vehemently. On no account would he allow—under pretext of estimating without any real basis whatsoever Germany's power of contribution for the next fifty years—France again to be deprived,—as she would have been in the case of a lump sum—of that absolute minimum reparation of damages to persons and property. M. Clemenceau protested and stated in these terms:

"All is all very well, but we have made formal promises to our people about reparations. We must keep our word unless it is clearly proved that we cannot do so. But such is not the case. It is said that Germany will find the price high. But it has not been proved and it cannot be proved that she cannot pay if enough time is given her. What we must avoid is going from one extreme to the other, and through fear of asking too much, not asking enough."

Digitized by Google

M. Loucheur, again urging our contention against an immediate and therefore inevitably too low evaluation of the German debt, called Helfferich's book to witness,—the thirteen thousand million annual excess of German production; the reduction in this production resulting from the war and the Treaty offset by a corresponding reduction in consumption; the price of products to be exported by Germany rising higher in proportion than that of food supplies to be imported by her; her coal production increasing before the war eight million tons a year; her exports in 1914 amounting in this respect to forty million tons and capable by a policy of extraction and restriction of being further raised to sixty, since also the Treaty deprived her taking lignite into account of only a small part of her combustibles;* this exportation of sixty million tons, at one hundred francs per ton—a price which would be maintained for a long time—alone representing six thousand millions gold a year. Notwithstanding the force of these arguments, no agreement was reached.

It was in these circumstances that the French Government, wishing above all to avoid an arbitrary sum which might in thirty years raise a Germany free from debt and prosperous at the doors of a France deeply involved, proposed the solution embodied in the Treaty which I have given above. From that time on agreement despite certain resistances, was definitely reached. Mr. Keynes, although acquiescing, asked finally that before a decision was reached, the question of their capacity for payment should be discussed with the Germans. The French representatives refused to be involved in this fool's game, and Mr. Lloyd George agreed with them. As for President Wilson,

*Germany's total production of coal and of lignite amounted in 1913, to 280 million tons, of which the Sarre accounted for thirteen millions; Upper Silesia for forty-eight. But, on the one hand, the production of the Sarre was consumed nearly entirely in Alsace-Lorraine; on the other, the Silesian production was consumed to the extent of ten million tons by the local factories; nine million tons by Poland, and four millions by Austria, leaving but twenty-five millions for German consumption. Taking into account the reduction of coal consumption resulting for Germany from the cession of territories the net loss of combustibles to her amounts only to twenty-five million tons, or one-eleventh of the total production of 1913.

Digitized by Google

he did not follow his advisers. The dangerous sophism of "capacity for payment" was finally discarded. Germany would pay what she had to pay; twenty thousand million marks gold before May 1, 1921; the remainder in thirty years if that were possible, or in a longer period if thirty years did not suffice.

The Germans may declare and repeat as often as they like that the Peace Conference never gave a thought to their capacity for payment. What has just been read answers this. The truth is that the Conference, under the stubborn guidance of M. Clemenceau, M. Klotz and M. Loucheur, understood the peril involved in a method which consisted in first declaring not "Germany will pay what she owes," but "Germany can pay only a certain sum." Capacity for payment? On what date? Certainly not on that of the signing of the Treaty, after fifty-two months of war and six months of revolution, the immediate effect of which was only too easy to exploit. Capacity for payment over a fixed number of years? Based upon what? Limited by what? Here again the risk was too great of liberating vanquished Germany before the victims of her aggression. France would have none of this risk and in accord with her Allies she rejected all solutions which directly or indirectly would have led to this result. France's well justified determination to found the Treaty, not upon the arbitrary presumption of German capacity, opening the door to only too likely duplicity, but upon the definition of a positive obligation, never wavered for a single instant. For the adjustment of the annual payments, the Reparations Commission will take into fair account Germany's resources. But it will do so within the limits of a debt fixed at the latest by May 1, 1921, once and for all by the extent of the damages.

That Germany is not able to pay all that she in justice owes is recognized by Article 232, dispensing Germany from the reimbursement of war costs. For the rest—damage to persons and property and pensions—her obligation will be absolute and her capacity for payment will be taken

Digitized by Google

into consideration only in order to fix the number of annuities, the total amount having in any event to be fully and completely paid whether in thirty years or in a longer period. Nothing could be clearer; nothing more just. For in this matter the question between the Allies and Germany presents itself clearly. It is "Germany or the Allies." We do not demand that Germany should pay in full by a fixed date. We demand of her, once the damages for which she is liable have been computed, to arrange to pay for as long as may be necessary, the yearly installments for the acquittal of her debt. Under this system—what alone is fair—Germany's capacity for payment is not gauged by her wealth at the time of the peace, but by her capacity for production and her will to work for a long period during which her renascent forces may expand. Time here is the essential factor and this is what destroys at their very base Germany's mendacious objections.

V

There still remained a grave difficulty for the Allies. They had just seen that Germany by reason of the size of her debt could only pay it by annual installments. Yet they knew only too well that Germany's creditors by reason of the extent of their ruins needed prompt payment. There was but one method of reconciling these two conflicting needs:—the conversion of the debt by means of credits. With this in view, the lump sum had been proposed. I have shown why France rejected it. So it became necessary to find for the beneficiaries another way of negotiating the deed drawn up in their favour.

I did not take part in the discussion of the financial clauses of the peace. But the close unity between M. Clemenceau and his co-workers kept each of them informed as to the negotiations as a whole and enabled him to formulate suggestions concerning matters for which he was not directly responsible. It was under such conditions that, on April 5, 1919, I handed to the French Premier and to M. Klotz and M. Loucheur, a Note in which after dealing with

Digitized by Google

the question of the sum total of the debt, the manner of its payment and the guarantees—I approached the question which I called the "materialization" of the debt due the Allies:

The better to figure the debt due the Allies and at the same time to permit the combination set out below, the preliminaries might impose upon the Germans the delivery of a single Treasury bond of "X" billion gold marks, payable on July 1, 1921, under agreement on the part of the Allies to exchange this bond on above date for a series of bonds of the same nature, payable at various dates determinable by the Inter-allied Commission entrusted with fixing the manner of payment.

These bonds would serve to pay for German merchandise. Each year an inter-allied organization would fix the rate at which these bonds would be convertible into francs, pounds sterling, dollars, etc.

These bonds would take precedence over all the German interior indebtedness.

The Allies would have the right to sell them, even to Germans. They could be quoted, on the principal markets of the world, as commercial paper.

It would be stipulated that they should never lapse and that in case of non-payment they should bear compound interest.

On the other hand, it would be well to allow the Germans to liberate themselves at any time by anticipation at a favourable rate.

In this way, the Allies would have in their hands international money as a medium of exchange between themselves, or with neutrals.

When they would no longer buy German merchandise in the same quantities, they would sell these bonds to other purchasers. The Germans also under certain circumstances would have an interest in redeeming these bonds.

Finally in case at the end of the thirtieth year the Germans had not redeemed the whole of their debt the Allies would still have in hand a medium of exchange which would always be valid and which could be sold to buyers of German merchandise in any country of the world.

This brief and imperfect outline was adopted by my colleagues. About the same time one of the English financial experts, Lord Sumner, had hit upon the same idea and

Digitized by Google

in the days following it was subjected to a minute examination by the special committee which at the end of March had been appointed to deal with the financial solutions. The immediate issue of a single bond did not appear feasible and as a beginning a lower figure was taken to stand on account of the total amount of the debt. On April 7, the matter was taken up by the Council of Four. There was really no discussion as to the principle which was accepted by all. It was necessary, as M. Klotz pointed out, to obtain without delay from the enemy, so as to pave the way for the execution of the Treaty, some pledge which might well be in the shape of bonds. M. Klotz added:

"These bonds to be at once exacted from Germany would be equivalent to the written acknowledgment which a creditor demands from a debtor who cannot pay cash. If the debtor is not insolvent, the paper is negotiable. It is by such means that we shall enable our countries to live while awaiting the final settlement.

"Besides Germany must fully understand this obligation when she signs the Treaty. We shall settle the amount of the bond issue. This must be submitted to the enemy and embodied in the Treaty."

The question of the amount led to some discussion. Mr. Lloyd George seemed to fear that the announcement of the amount might mislead public opinion. The so-called "lump sum" plan had been rejected. It had been decided to define Germany's debt by the list of specific damages for which she was responsible. If the Treaty without stipulating the amount of the debt contained that of the bonds would there not be confusion in the public mind which might mistake it for the sum total of the German obligation? M. Klotz answered immediately:

"It is easy to avert this misunderstanding. This is merely a payment in bonds on account of the total amount of an outstanding indebtedness payable to the full in annual installments. Between private individuals when there are no mortgages the creditor asks his debtor to give him in

Digitized by Google

acknowledgment of his debt a negotiable paper bearing his signature."

And M. Clemenceau added:

"I don't understand what difficulty there is in fixing the amount of a payment on account. My watch is stolen, my pictures, my furniture. The thief is caught. It is not difficult to make a preliminary estimate before the valuation of my total loss. This is done every day. It is the custom of our courts."

An agreement was easily reached. But then President Wilson, analyzing the practical application of the plan, made certain very sound observations which threw an interesting light on the operation.

"The important thing," he declared, "in fixing the amount, is to bear clearly in mind what we intend to do with the bonds once they are issued.

"The object of this bond issue is to supply collateral for loans. An effort will doubtless be made to place a great substantial part of them in the United States. Suppose the amount of the bond issue is excessive; it will reduce the value of the collateral and produce a bad impression upon the prospective lenders. The amount of the issue will have an influence on world credit.

"If the banks refuse to take an over-issue as collateral, the credit of your countries will fall. Therefore it is of capital importance that the issue be for a definite amount and it must not be excessive."

The American expert, Mr. Norman Davis, betrayed the same concern by saying:

"I do not dispute that Germany can within a very short time pay the interest of these bonds in gold. But if the bond issue is too large, she will be unable to do so and the bonds will be useless."

This matter was of capital interest for France. It was obvious that the American Government had a perfectly clear conception of the financial aid that the United States would have to furnish their associates for the negotiation and the realization of the amount owing to them. At the

Digitized by Google

same time as he showed anxiety that the call upon American credit should be neither too sudden nor too heavy, the President acknowledged it to be both indispensable and justified. The British as well as the French immediately gave assurances which satisfied the United States representatives.

"The Reparations Commission," said M. Klotz, "will begin by keeping these bonds in its treasury. It would be very dangerous to put too large an amount of bonds upon the market in a limited length of time."

And Mr. Lloyd George made the following point:

"It is evident that if there are too many bonds on the market they will fall in value. But it is the country depending upon them as collateral that will be the first to suffer. If France, Belgium, or Great Britain throw too great an amount of bonds upon the market it is these Powers themselves that will suffer. You can therefore rely upon their common sense."

A draft presented by Lord Sumner met with unanimous approval. It fixed at 100 thousand million marks gold on account the amount of the bond issue to be embodied in the Treaty, and divided it into three parts under the effective control of the Reparations Commission, as follows:

(1) An immediate issue (as of January, 1920) of twenty thousand million marks gold in bearer bonds, payable on May 1, 1921, at the latest.

(2) An issue, also immediate, of forty thousand million gold marks in bearer bonds.

(3) A written undertaking to issue, whenever called for by the Reparations Commission, a third series of bearer bonds of forty thousand million marks gold.

This system was during the debates on ratification the subject of erroneous interpretations which, I need hardly say, were not always involuntary. Mr. Lloyd George, who knows Parliaments well, feared that some would feign to believe that the total figure of these three series of bonds—100 thousand million gold marks—represented the whole amount of what Germany had to pay. I do not insist upon

Digitized by Google

this misconception which does not even bear examination. Others mistook the bonds which are an acknowledgment and an instrument of credit for a means of payment and confused them with the one and only means of payment which the Treaty provides, namely annual payments in money and in kind that Germany must make until the settlement of her debt, to which interest on the deficit balance will be added each year. Here again the account I have just given re-establishes the truth and defines the nature of the bonds which represent neither the total of the debt nor a discharge, but a negotiable acknowledgment to be used when the Reparations Commission deems negotiation possible and proper.

M. Loucheur and M. Klotz furnished in the course of the parliamentary debates, explanation which may well be repeated:

"These bonds," explained the former, "are not a means of payment. They are embodied in the Treaty as an acknowledgment and a guarantee of the debt.

"Germany's account will be made up every year like any ordinary debit and credit account. The sum total which Germany owes will be registered on May 1, 1921. As an hypothesis, I take three hundred thousand million. On May, 1, 1922, a year later, Germany will be charged in addition to the three hundred thousand million with interest for the year 1921 at the rate of five per cent., that is with three hundred thousand millions plus fifteen thousand millions and she will be credited with the payments she has actually made. The bonds will play no part in the making up of this account.

"But we needed to be able under certain conditions to discount Germany's debt. We needed a certain number of securities which we could eventually negotiate, if we so desired, and which at our option we could eventually use to discount in whole or in a part the annual installment that Germany must pay.

"After admitting that the only practical means of payment was by means of yearly installments, we could not do otherwise, if we intended eventually to discount these annuities, than to take a certain number of securities negotiable at our pleasure but which we are in no way obliged to accept in payment."

Digitized by Google

And then M. Klotz showed how these bonds would be employed and the manner in which they would be secured.

"As a result," he said, "of the terms of the Treaty the action of the Reparations Commission will really give these bonds a real moral guarantee.

"First, over and above the two first bond issues (twenty thousand million and forty thousand million marks gold) to be delivered by Germany, the Commission will call for other issues only when it is satisfied that Germany can pay the interest and sinking fund of the bonds.

"Second guarantee: the sale and negotiation of the bonds delivered by Germany will be subject to the unanimous decision of the Commission. In the spirit of the Treaty this very clearly means that such authorization will be given only when Germany's credit and the condition of the market permit their easy negotiation.

"To this twofold moral guarantee, it may be necessary on occasion to add that which each country receiving bonds may wish to give, and also the very important guarantee implied in the sale of bonds in neutral countries after appropriate negotiations."

The purpose of these bonds to be issued by Germany is thus clear. The Allies did not imagine when they included this obligation in the Treaty that they could negotiate these securities immediately. They nevertheless imposed the issue and the delivery of these bonds because in dealing with a reluctant debtor it is of no small importance to hold an acknowledgment of his debt, negotiable at pleasure and bearing interest, and because in view of Germany's all too probable duplicity it was well that securities covering an appreciable part of the debt should be in the hands of the creditors.

Let us not in fact be deceived. Germany's game as played by Mr. Hugo Stinnes is to revive her economic activity by freeing it from the mortgage of the Treaty of Versailles. Do I need to insist on the absolute fairness of these safeguards without which an untouched Germany would in a few years gain an advantage over her devastated conquerors which it would be impossible to overcome? The bond system was the best of guarantees against such a plan.

Digitized by Google

For as soon as German revival, of which all the essentials are undestroyed, makes itself felt in the world markets, the Reparations Commission by placing these bonds in circulation will associate Germany's creditors with her revival, and Germany to safeguard the progress made as well as not to compromise the future will, whether she wishes it or not, be obliged to honour her signature. In fact it will be in the very markets where she needs to develop her credit that she will meet the paper delivered to the Allies for negotiation and placed in circulation by the Reparations Commission. The bonds, in other words, are an elastic and safe-guaranteed security which can be made use of at once and to an ever-increasing extent as German resources grow.

VI

Such, in its general lines, is the system the Treaty of Versailles imposes on Germany for the settlement of her debt. The account of the discussion which led to its adoption shows how conscientiously it was studied and how its principle was arrived at:

(1) Germany is responsible, as having caused them, for the total amount of the loss and damage suffered by the victors from the fact of her aggression.

(2) Germany in view of the permanent diminution of her resources resulting from the Treaty is only bound—but bound without restrictions or reserves—to reimburse the sum total of damages and pensions as defined and specified in Annex 1, Part 8, of the Treaty.

(3) Germany is to pay, before May 1, 1921, 20,000 million marks gold in money and in kind.

(4) On May 1, 1921, at the latest, the Reparations Commission is to fix the total amount of Germany's debt.

(5) This debt will be liquidated by annual installments, the amount of which will be fixed each year by the Reparations Commission.

(6) The payments will continue for thirty years, and longer if at the end of thirty years the debt is not paid in full.

Digitized by Google

(7) Germany will issue 100,000 million marks gold in bearer bonds and later all bonds that the Reparations Commission calls for up to the total amount of the debt, this to permit its mobilization at the Allies' pleasure.

(8) These payments will be effected in money and in kind. The payments in kind will be made in coal, cattle, chemical product, ships already launched or under construction, machines, implements and furnishings. The payments in money will be made in bullion, in German credits both public and private in foreign countries, and by first lien on all the property and revenues of the Empire and of the German States.

(9) The Reparations Commission entrusted with the execution of these clauses, will have a right of supervision and decision. Called upon to decide "and without being bound by any particular code or rules of law or by any particular rule of evidence or procedure, but guided by justice, equity and good faith" it obtained from Germany by the terms of the Treaty "the irrevocable recognition of its power and authority." Enjoying all diplomatic rights and immunities it will have until full payment of the debt to supervise Germany's situation, her "financial situation and operations, her property, productive capacity, and stocks and current production," and, at the same time, to investigate what she can pay annually, and also to see to it that these payments, added to her budgets, make her tax-payers liable for at least as much as those of the most heavily taxed of the Allied countries. Its decisions will be immediately enforceable and "will receive immediate application without other formalities." It will have to initiate by its proposals all changes recognized as necessary in German laws and regulations, as well as all financial, economic or military penalties for violations of the clauses it has power to enforce. Germany pledges herself beforehand not to consider these penalties, no matter what they may be, as acts of hostility.

These clauses are severe. If they were not, they would not be just. However, all the financial clauses of the Treaty

Digitized by Google

are marked by an unquestionable spirit of moderation. Part of the payments made before May 1, 1921, is earmarked to pay for German purchases abroad. The Reparations Commission, in fixing the debtor's annual payments, is to take into consideration Germany's internal needs with a view to maintaining its social and economic life. It will exact from Germany delivery of machinery, equipment, tools and the like only if no stock of these articles is for sale in the open market, and in no case in excess of thirty per cent. of the stocks of each article in any German establishment. The coal deliveries, which are imposed for a short period only and the annual maximum of which is below forty million tons, represent fourteen per cent. of the German coal and lignite production in 1913 and eighteen per cent. of this production minus that of Alsace-Lorraine, the Sarre and Upper Silesia. None of these clauses resembles the Draconian* conditions which Germany imposed in 1918 on Russia by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk; on Roumania by the Peace of Bucharest—conditions which their authors publicity declared were nothing compared to those that Germany intended to impose upon the Western Powers.

Mr. Keynes was able, by criticizing certain articles of the peace separately and by means of misleading statistics, to argue that the problem of reparation was dealt with in an abusive manner. I have replaced the matter in its true light. I have shown how the question presented itself, and how it was solved. It could not in justice have been solved otherwise. The Allies, to whom the war has cost more than 1,000,000 millions demand from Germany only about 350,000 millions. These two figures tell the whole story. They prove that the financial bases of the Treaty of Versailles are fair and moderate. As for the assertion that they constitute a violation of the bases of the peace, or in Mr. Keynes' words, "an act comparable to the invasion of

*The Treaty of Bucharest obliged Roumania from 1919 to 1926 to deliver to Germany her entire surplus, and to yield to a company controlled by the German Government, the right to operate, for ninety years, all her petroleum wells. The treaties of Germany with Ukrainia, Poland and Finland contained analogous clauses.

Digitized by Google

Belgium," it only shows a curious inability to distinguish between right and wrong combined with absolute ignorance of the facts. As President Wilson declared on June 6, 1919, "the Treaty is in entire conformity with the Fourteen Points." The Germans are to make good the total amount of the damages suffered by the population. Surely death and the mutilation are the most obvious of these damages. The Germans, after thinking it over for seventy-two hours, signed the Armistice, which reads: "With the reservation that any subsequent claims of the Allies and the United States remain unaffected, reparation for damage done." Mr. Keynes answers, it is true, that this is a "casual protective phrase." The weakness of his argument calls for no comment.

Germany had premeditated not only the complete military defeat, but also the economical and financial ruin of her adversaries. The victorious Powers compel her to repay about thirty per cent. of the damage done by her. Such an obligation after such an aggression is neither abusive nor cruel. I add, passing from equity to facts, that it is far from unenforceable.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X

HOW THE ALLIES WILL BE PAID

Everything that Germany did during the peace negotiations showed what her subsequent acts, since the Treaty entered into effect, have overwhelmingly proved: her determination not to pay. This determination is a settled policy, it is the policy of business, Germany striving to snatch economic victory from military defeat.

This ambitious aspiration has its origin in the situation created by the war. On the one hand, victorious countries invaded, indebted and systematically ruined by the German invasion; on the other, Germany beaten but untouched, with an insignificant foreign debt, all her factories sound, her industry developed by the war itself. If victors and vanquished renew commercial competition at the same time and on equal terms, the triumph of Germany is assured. This is what the peace-makers at Versailles tried to avert: hence some of the reparations clauses; hence the general mortgages taken on the financial resources of Germany; hence certain non-reciprocal clauses concerning customs for five years; hence the obligation imposed upon the beaten foe to deliver up raw materials; hence the power of supervision given to the Reparations Commission over Germany's economic and financial life. These are the clauses which German business men, headed by Herr Hugo Stinnes, have determined to overthrow.

These captains of German industry know better than anyone that the state of German industry is not that described in their newspapers. They know that in many branches—automobiles, for example—German industry has since 1915 increased its capital by hundreds of millions.

Digitized by Google

They know that in the month of March, 1920, alone, financial melons were cut to the amount of 163 million marks; that at the same time the munition factories distributed dividends of from twelve to sixteen per cent. They know that Germany is not suffering as much as France from lack of coal, either for industrial or domestic consumption, and that in Germany the production of pig iron in 1920 amounted to one-half the 1913 output, while in France it amounted to scarcely one-fourth. But they know also that if Germany does not supply France during the next few years with the amount of coal she owes under the Treaty, French industry will not recover and will be outstripped by German industry. They know that, if the damage done to persons and property is not paid for by Germany in accordance with the Treaty, the French budget, heavily overburdened, will not be able to devote to the development of our national resources the means which circumstances call for and which Germany dreads. That is why by every possible means they strive to keep for an unhampered Germany, the means of economic supremacy which the Treaty makers at Versailles have rightly handicapped.

Their aim is clear; their method simple. With tearful pathos Germany is alleged to be incapable of working and producing. To make believe a few factories are closed here and there—sometimes in so obviously an arbitrary manner that protests are elicited, even from the German Press. Out-of-employment crises are trumpetted abroad. Europe is threatened with Bolshevism. Active propaganda is conducted in foreign countries; Germany is gaining time. She is reorganizing. She is getting ready and to-morrow, if the Allies allow themselves to be duped by this camouflage, Germany, freed from supervision, mistress of her raw materials, rid on easy terms of her heavy debt, will again go forth to conquer the markets of the world with all the inestimable advantage of untouched means and hampered competitors. Meanwhile it is asserted that to pay in gold, exports are essential and that as Germany consumes more than she produces, exports are impossible. This plea,

Digitized by Google

which blossomed in 1920, was that of the German technical experts in 1919, when summoned to the Château de Villette and to Versailles. If the Allied Governments had entertained it, they would not only have betrayed the sacred interest of their respective peoples; they would have been victims of a colossal hoax.

The wealth of Germany was before the war a favourite theme of German propaganda. The reader will remember Helfferich's book in which he estimated at 10,000 million marks Germany's annual excess of production (43,000 million marks) over her consumption (33,000 million marks.) Other authors went still further. Alfred Lansburg reckoned the consumption at 40,000 or 45,000 millions. Steinmann-Bucher calculated production as amounting to 45,000 or 50,000 millions, the consumption as 35,000 millions, and the surplus at 12,000 or 15,000 millions. Figures of such magnitude are necessarily approximate only, but even with this reservation they are useful as indications and it is as such and as such only that I quote them. Now the war is over and peace is declared, what has become of the elements of these statistics? Germany like all the belligerents saw her productive capacity lessened by the war. Having been beaten she has seen it still further lessened by the Treaty of Peace. What does the reduction—to which Lord Cunliffe, as we have seen, refused to attach undue importance—amount to?

Germany lost during the war a part of her human capital: 1,800,000 killed and 4,000,000 wounded. The percentage of invalidity of the wounded is generally reckoned at between thirty-three per cent. and forty per cent., so the total loss of available labour would be equal to the work of three to three and one-half million men. But it is a matter of common knowledge that the employment of women and children has greatly increased and the military clauses of the Treaty (100,000 soldiers instead of 880,000) leave a large number of men available for agricultural and industrial work; furthermore the increment of population in Germany should also be taken into consideration. From

Digitized by Google

1895 to 1907, the yearly increment amounted to 774,000, of which the "active" population represented 500,000, or roughly sixty-five per cent. of the total. Even after deducting from future estimates the territories which Germany has lost by the Treaty of Peace, the fact remains that the decrease in her man power will not be felt to any considerable extent. No allowance need, therefore, be made on this score.

On the other hand there has been loss of territory. The German Empire, built up by might, has been reduced by right. It has lost Alsace and Lorraine, the greater portion of its Eastern Polish provinces and Schleswig,—say, in round figures, a population of eight million inhabitants, or, in other words, about one-eighth of the total population according to the census of 1910. As the lost territories, according to their contributions to public expenditure, appear to be of average wealth, it may be deduced that the territorial clauses of the Treaty of Peace have reduced the productive power of Germany to the extent roughly speaking of one-eighth, or 43,000 millions divided by eight: 5,375 millions. To purely German losses must be added German colonial losses. We shall make ample allowance for the latter by taking them to represent a yearly output loss equal to 125 millions, which would bring the total reduction of Germany's productive capacity, directly due to the territorial clauses in the Treaty of Peace, to about 5,500 millions.

German capital has, also, suffered in others ways. In the first place by the reduction of assets in foreign countries. Personal property to the amount of about 5,000 millions has been realized. Property sequestrated by the Allied and Associated Governments amounts to between 11,000 and 13,000 millions; loans in foreign countries 2,000 millions, or say a (maximum) total of 20,000 millions. Loans granted by Germany to her Allies (10,000 or 12,000 millions) should not be deducted from this loss, inasmuch as Article 261 of the Treaty transfers them to the Allies. The reduction of capital under the head of assets in foreign

Digitized by Google

countries, thus amounts to 20,000 millions. To these 20,000 millions must be added certain losses which can be readily calculated, viz.: stocks which have disappeared, 20,000 millions; damage caused by the Russian invasion in Eastern Prussia 2,000 millions; lastly, according to the terms of Article 235, Germany is to deliver to the Allies before May 1, 1921, either in cash or in kind (gold, ships, liquidation of German investments in foreign countries, cattle, machinery and tool equipment, cables, etc.), 20,000 millions marks gold. These four items, added together, show a capital loss of 62,000 millions.

We now come to another item which is more difficult to estimate: capital loss by lack of maintenance. Some of this went to feeding the people—cattle, for instance—or to war manufactures—as in the case of copper. How can this loss be expressed in figures? German capital was estimated by Helfferich (whose figures I take because, as they are lower than Steinmann-Bucher's, they are less favourable to my argument) at 330,000 million marks. What does capital loss by lack of maintenance of deterioration amount to?

If we deduct urban sites (25 to 30,000 millions) which call for neither upkeep nor amortization; then the amounts of capital we have already reckoned as definitively lost, there remains a maximum of 200,000 millions on which loss owing to depreciation, etc., may be calculated; let us take this depreciation at five per cent. per annum for four years and four months, say 43,000 millions. This is a liberal estimate. For on the one hand, rural lands and house property have certainly not suffered—one need only make a trip to Germany to ascertain this—a depreciation of five per cent. per annum; and, in the second place, new industrial constructions compensate, to a great extent, the depreciation of old ones. If to such depreciation be added to other capital loss the total amounts to (62,000+43,000=) 105,000 millions. I do not think this figure can be criticized, especially *as it exceeds the figures furnished by the Germans themselves*—by Lansburg, for instance, who, for

Digitized by Google

the first two years of war estimated the total reduction of national capital at only 28,000 millions. As the average net revenue of German capital (according to the balance-sheet of industrial, agricultural and landed property) has generally been reckoned at six per cent., the yearly decrease of productive capacity, corresponding to this loss of 105,-000 millions in capital, amounts to 6,300 millions. By adding together this decrease of revenue and that charge-able to losses of territory, the total obtained is 11,800 mil-lions, as shown in the following:

Diminution of Productive Capacity (in millions of marks)		
From losses of territories		5,500
Revenue on capital loss of 105,000 millions as under		6,300
Assets in foreign countries	20,000	
Exhausted stocks	20,000	
Damage caused by war	2,000	
Immediate payments	20,000	
Depreciation and lack of up-keep	43,000	
	105,000	
Total		11,800

Based on German statistics and on the statistics most favourable to Germany, this table would indicate Ger-many's productive capacity as equal to 31,200 million marks, instead of 43,000 millions before the war. It is this or an approaching figure that the Germans take as a basis for their assertion that as their output will now forth be less than their consumption, 33,000 millions, they are unable to export anything and therefore cannot pay for anything in gold. But it is here that the fallacy is clearly shown. For if the war and the conditions of peace have reduced the productive capacity of Germany, they have likewise reduced its consumption, and it is precisely by German statistics that such a reduction can be proved.

Taking no account, as in the preceding chapter, of losses in men, we shall first bear in mind that losses of territories represent one-eighth of the population and, consequently,

Digitized by Google

of the consumption—that is to say in round figures 33,000 millions divided by eight or 4,120 millions. But this is not the only decrease, there remains another to be considered which, though more difficult to estimate, is nevertheless certain; that caused by the reduction in standard of living.

In this connection, German economists are unanimous. Lansburg calculates this reduction at one-third of the consumption which as already stated, he reckons at 40,000 to 45,000 millions; it would therefore be something between 13,000 and 15,000 millions. On the other hand, the success of the war loans (151,000 millions) and the increase of deposits, both in savings-banks (15,000 millions) and in current accounts (13,500 millions) besides the capital increases of companies show us that the German people contrived to save 180,000 millions in four years, or say about 45,000 millions yearly. These figures are doubtless subject to certain reservations. There has been a rise in prices. There has been a considerable increase of currency circulation. The fact nevertheless remains that there has been a decrease in consumption. At what amount should it be estimated? Lansburg calculated it between 13,000 and 15,000 millions. In order to be extremely conservative, I will reckon it at 6,000 millions. These 6,000 millions, added to the 4,120 millions chargeable to loss of territories, give a minimum total of 10,120 millions, which reduces the consumption amounting to 33,000 millions before the war, to 21,880 millions, after the declaration of peace.

We are now in possession of two very important factors (both bases for calculations.) The productive capacity would seem to have been reduced, by the war and by the peace, from 43,000 millions to 31,200 millions. The consumption on the other hand would seem to have been reduced from thirty-three billions to twenty-one billions, 880 millions. The surplus which amounted to 10,000 millions before the war appears to be 8,320 millions since peace. For the sake of greater clearness, I give a synopsis of the foregoing analysis in the following table:

Digitized by Google

Yearly Production		Yearly Consumption (public and private)		Production in excess of consumption
		in Millions of Marks		
A.—Before the war.....	43,000	33,000		43,000—33,000=10,000
B.—Reduction owing to the war				
(1) Losses of territories..5.5	11,800	4,120		
(2) Losses of capital....6.5			10,120	
(3) Restrictions of comforts ..		6,000		
C.—After the war.....	31,200	22,880		31,200—22,880= 8,320

These figures are significant in themselves, but they do not tell the whole truth for the two following reasons. Firstly, because the foregoing calculations, based on German statistics, have been worked out in marks and the surplus amounts, which they show, represent surplus quantities of products. To reckon these surplus amounts at their real value, the increase in the price of such products in gold must therefore be added. The second reason was made remarkably clear by Lord Cunliffe, Governor of the Bank of England, in the report submitted by him in the name of the sub-commission of the Peace Conference appointed to investigate Germany's capacity to pay. Lord Cunliffe therein stated: "Germany, responsible for the destruction caused by the war, must impose upon herself restrictions in order to repair it. She must by such restrictions maintain herself as an exporting country to meet the payment of her reparation debts." What does this mean except that—for so long as her debt remains unpaid—it is but right and necessary that Germany should stint herself in order to export, or in other words, to pay? A single example. On Sundays there are more suburban trains running from Berlin than from Paris. This state of things should be entirely reversed. The quantity of coal available for export—that is to say, one means of effecting payment, —would be thereby increased by just that much. Similar abuses—which the Reparation Commission would strictly

Digitized by Google

forbid if it closely supervised the economic life of Germany—are noticeable in all directions.

Remember also that in May, 1920, the exports of Germany exceeded her imports. And then notice that on every page of the German newspapers there are signs of an industrial and commercial revival to which the advertisements, if no other proof were forthcoming, would testify. Everywhere there are advertisements for managers, department heads, travellers, engineers. Everywhere there are advertisements for goods, motors, glass, machinery, tires, trucks. The business advertising of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* is double what it was before the war. Business which was slack during the year that followed the Armistice, is reviving from one end of Germany to the other. The increase of output leaves no room for doubt. Restrictions are at present dependent upon the will of the consumer. Germany now has in hand and will continue to have in increasing degree the necessary means for the payment that she must make. The picture she drew of her position at the International Conferences of Spa and Brussels is a camouflage. It is the duty of the Allies to re-establish the truth.

What conclusion are we to draw? I do not profess to be a political economist. When I quote statistics, I put forward no claim to infallibility of interpretation, indeed I am the first to call attention to the co-efficient of error they may contain. I say only that when a man goes so far as to assert that Germany cannot pay in thirty years more than 2,000,000,000 pounds (50,000 million francs at par, or 120,000 million francs at the highest 1920 exchange) he oversteps the limits of permissible tomfoolery and is only making fun of Germany's victims. The war cost the Allies 1,000,000 millions. Mr. Keynes would ask Germany to pay only 50,000 millions, or one-twentieth of the total cost. Count Brockdorff offered twice as much. That alone condemns the pro-German scribe of Cambridge. As to M. Helfferich, busy in 1920 controverting the statistics he himself published in 1913, he does not deserve that one should pay attention to his contradictory denials. I do not know

Digitized by Google

and nobody knows what Germany will be able to pay in each of the thirty or forty years that are to come. It it the duty of the Reparations Commission to fix the amount every year. But even now it is permissible to assert that in thirty or forty years Germany, which alone of all the European belligerents comes out of the war without any foreign debt, will be able approximately to pay enough (interest and sinking fund included) to about cover the actual amount of damages to persons and property and of pensions. This fact is the only thing that counts. The means are the work of to-morrow. The principle must even now be asserted. Germany must pay. Germany can pay. How can she be made to pay? How will what she pays be divided? These last two questions were ones which the peace-makers had to decide.

II

That Germany could pay had been proved by the preliminary studies I have analyzed above. That Germany would endeavour by every possible means not to pay, no one for a moment doubted and because they knew this to be so everybody was agreed that in order to get paid the Allies must adopt means of supervision and of guarantee. What kind of supervision? What kind of guarantees? Here is where the difficulty began, owing both to the nature of the problem and to differences of opinion that manifested themselves.

On February 24, 1919, the special sub-commission intrusted with this matter held its first meeting. It was presided over by the British delegate, Mr. Hughes, Prime Minister of Australia. France was represented by M. Klotz, Minister of Finance, assisted by MM. de Verneuil, de Lachaume, and Chevalier. The task was unprecedented. If former treaties had instituted for the supervision and guarantee of the financial obligations they imposed, conditions which proved efficacious, none of these precedents applied to the present case. When in 1871 Bismarck

Digitized by Google

exacted 5,000 millions from us, all he had to do was to occupy for a few months a certain number of French Departments. Thiers, with an energy for which France remains ever grateful, collected in the shortest possible time the iniquitous war indemnity exacted by the aggressor and freed French territory. In 1919 the situation was entirely different. It was no longer five or ten thousand millions. For damages to persons and property and for pensions alone Germany owed more than 350,000 millions. Such a sum could only be paid in numerous annuities. So it was clear that methods employed in the past to supervise and guarantee payments which were nearly a hundred times less could not be applied here. Besides this stupendous accounting was not between two Powers, one victorious and the other vanquished. There were more than twenty victorious Powers and not less than four vanquished. For these two reasons it was absolutely necessary, the usual methods being inadequate, to seek a new solution.

The sub-commission—whose work was delayed by the necessity of awaiting the reports of two other sub-commissions, one intrusted with the evaluation of damages and the other with the estimation of means and capacity of payment—could not do more than examine suggestions, some of which, however, threw light upon the state of mind of the principal delegations. The British, American and Italian delegations were agreed in their opinion that military occupation could not be continued until the German debt had been paid in full. They had in mind a maximum occupation of two years. Mr. Hughes although fully determined to make Germany pay, for he insisted that she should be made to pay not only damages to persons and property and pensions but all the costs of the war besides, said on March 11:

"The Army of Occupation can only be a provisional expedient. It is a means of supervision which can only be counted upon for a relatively short period."

So on this point there was a fundamental disagreement

Digitized by Google

between France and her Allies.* On the other points, however, the Commission was unanimous. It was of the opinion that taking into consideration the magnitude of the debt and the necessity of its payment by installments, the principal measures to be taken, as suggested by Mr. Hughes, were the following:

1. The creation of an International Commission whose duty it would be to receive the payments from Germany, to supervise her revenues and her expenditures, her capital, her production and her exports, and also to distribute between the various creditors the amounts received in money or in kind.

2. The emission by the German Government of a loan to cover the total amount due by it to the Allies, this to be a preferential loan taking precedence of all German war loans and to be made in successive issues.

3. Germany to be forced to restrict its consumption and its expenditures, especially on luxuries.

4. Control of all German imports so as to limit these imports to raw materials strictly necessary to her economic existence.

This was a very mild and conservative programme. Yet it is to be noted that certain delegates feared that even this degree of supervision would restrict the productive capacity of Germany necessary to the payment of her debt. Such being the starting point, what was the result?

At the time that this discussion was in progress, the ruling opinion in France was that the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and of the bridgeheads would not only give the Allies military security, but also insure their being paid. This was the opinion expressed on May 6 at the plenary session of the Conference by Marshal Foch when he said:

> To force the enemy to fulfill his undertakings there is only one military means. It is to continue the occupation of the Rhine. .....When we find that we are paid and that we have suffi-

*See Chapter V.

Digitized by Google

cient guarantees, we shall only have to withdraw the troops and go away.

I have shown with what energy M. Clémenceau had to fight first to obtain and then to maintain as one of the terms of the Treaty, the occupation of the Rhine for fifteen years and the right to prolong this occupation in case of non-fulfillment of Germany's undertakings or of the inadequacy of guarantees against a new aggression; the right even to renew occupation in case after evacuation these conditions were not fulfilled. Twice in April and June this demand of the French Premier came near to breaking up the Entente of the Allies and even the Conference itself. It was impossible to go any further. Is a proof needed? Every time that we had to cope with the bad faith of Germany—in February over disarmament; in July over the article of her constitution which in violation of the Treaty prepared the way for union with Austria; a little later after the sinking of her fleet at Scapa Flow—every time that the French Government proposed to extend the occupation and to lay hands upon the Ruhr, the Allied Governments opposed an absolute refusal.

Besides this extension of occupation, even if Allied opposition had not been so uncompromising, was subject to objections put forward by the very people who advocated it, or developed by events and the very nature of things. When in February, 1919, to force Germany to disarm, M. Loucheur, on instructions from M. Clemenceau, presented a plan for the occupation of the Ruhr, it was Marshal Foch himself who pointed out that the forces necessary for such an occupation—it was thought that ten divisions would be necessary—were out of proportion with the advantages it was hoped to derive. Also people are apt to forget how difficult at that time the problem of effectives was for all the Governments. The British, the Canadians, the Australians, the South Africans were all as anxious as the Americans to return home. In France itself not a week passed in which all parties in Parliament did not

Digitized by Google

demand immediate demobilization, which moreover was justified by serious economic considerations. Was it possible in these conditions to plan and carry out a policy which, every time Germany failed in her financial undertakings, would have entailed an extension of occupation? Certainly not.

Besides what would have been the good of such a policy from the financial point of view? I have quoted what Marshal Foch said on May 6 at the Peace Conference and I have said that the bulk of French opinion was with him: "Occupy the left bank and we shall be paid." But what has happened. Ever since the Armistice the left bank and the bridgeheads have been strongly held. We are in the very period to which the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies referred when he said at that same meeting of May 6, "during this period the Treaty gives us complete guarantees." Has anyone noticed that Germany is more disposed to fulfil her financial undertakings any the better? In March, 1920, our Armies occupied Frankfort and the cities of the Mein. Has any one noticed that this occupation, fully justified under the Treaty, brought us a single additional mark? No. In other words occupation has a defensive value, and that is why M. Clemenceau made it a *sine qua non*. On the contrary its financial value, notwithstanding the illusions cherished in 1919 by the military authorities and by public opinion, is relative. In order to force Germany to pay by the occupation of her territory it would be necessary to occupy the whole of her territory for more than a generation. No one would have consented to that. No one even suggested it. Something different had to be found. What?

This question has been answered by people who delight in foretelling the past. They assert that all obstacles would have been overcome if the Peace Conference had only thought to exact financial guarantees from Germany, for instance by the control and seizure of revenues from customs, mines, railways or by the collection of taxes in the occupied parts of Germany. Thus in a moment the prob-

Digitized by Google

lem of indemnity was solved. By paying one's self, one was sure to be paid. "Who knows," as Montaigne would have said. The question was carefully studied by the Conference, and its examination led it to results which forced a contrary conviction. Control public utilities? That is easy to say. But who can fail to see that in order to do it an enormous personnel would have been necessary. Under the circumstances control would have meant operation, otherwise control would have been a sham. Who can fail to see that such a method adopted because of the debtor's refusal to pay, that is to say with the ever-present possibility of conflict, would have entailed in addition to the collecting and operating personnel, a personnel of protection—which means an armed force—thus leading inevitably to that total and prolonged occupation of German territory that none of the Allies would consent to and which was out of the question because the necessary forces were not available. To hold the ports, the customs, the railways, the mines, meant supplying custom officials, station masters, engineers, etc., and called for military police everywhere. No one would have risked such an adventure without the prospect of real advantage. But what advantage would there have been? That is precisely what the peace-makers inquired into, and what those who heap retrospective criticism upon them seem to ignore.

If we take a good normal year, such as 1913, for the revenues in question, we find that the German customs produced that year 800 million marks, and that the net profit of the operation of the mines was 375 million marks and of the railways 1,000 million marks, or altogether something over 2,000 million marks. Let us suppose which is, of course, not the case,* that the war has not reduced any of these revenues and let us see what they give. These 2,000 millions of revenue in paper marks are equal to 300 million marks gold at the present (1920) rate of exchange,—that is to say just enough under the most favourable conditions to pay six per cent. interest on 5,000 million marks gold

*The German Railways are now being operated at very considerable loss.

Digitized by Google

loan as against a reparations debt of about 350,000 million marks gold. As to the collection of taxes by the Allies in occupied territory it would have brought them an annual income of 500 million marks paper, sufficient to secure a loan of 1,600 million marks gold at six per cent. Here again the mountain gave birth to a mouse. The makers of the Treaty would have none of it.

The system of guarantees which they adopted consists —in addition to occupation, which I will not deal with again—in the right recognized to them by Germany of supervising the economic and financial life of Germany and forcing her to make by priority either in money or kind the payments necessary to the liquidation of her debt. The Reparations Commission for this purpose is the agent of the Governments. I have already called attention to the breadth of its attributions.* I do not need to return to this subject. I note only that when a group of Powers has, as is here the case, in regard to another Power the right not only to supervise its revenues, its expenditures, its production, its consumption, its commerce, the right not only to be paid in priority to all interior debts, not only to claim a prior lien on all State resources but also to insist upon all legislative and administrative changes which may be deemed necessary, and the right to place in circulation interest bearing bonds representing the debt,—I note only that, when a group of victorious and formidably armed Powers has such means of pressure upon a beaten and consenting foe, it requires some audacity to assert that guarantees are lacking. And the assertion that guarantees are lacking is no excuse for never having in any manner or at any time made any effort to enforce them.

The Treaty goes even further and after having given the victors these many grips upon the financial life of the beaten foe, it gives them the right in every case of deliberate non-compliance by Germany to enforce "economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals and in general such other measures as the respective Governments may deter-

*See Chapter IX, page 317.

Digitized by Google

mine to be necessary." Germany further undertakes "not to regard such measures as acts of war." In other words by the Treaty itself the Allied Governments possess not only a system of financial guarantees such as no other Treaty has ever provided, but also entire freedom in the choice of military, economic or other methods of enforcement in case these guarantees are not sufficient. There is not in the whole history of diplomacy a single instance of terms so precise, so broad, and so decisive. The only thing is to make use of them. So that if in many things the Treaty of Versailles being a compromise is necessarily imperfect, it contains on the other hand, as far as guarantees and enforcements are concerned, everything that it ought to and could contain.

III

Besides the guarantees of payment taken directly from Germany, right and reason suggested others based upon the unity existing among the Allies. After unity in war, unity in peace. Could not sacrifices borne in common include, after the losses in lives and property, the costs of settlement—the richest helping the less rich to bear their share of the burden? A great and noble idea, the well ordered righteousness of which appealed to the French people more than to any other, not so much because of France's enormous obligations as because of her love of justice. On careful analysis of the problem which is often presented in confused form, it is seen that the financial settlement of the war entailed inescapable burdens and possible risks for the conquerors. An inescapable burden —the cost of victory (700,000 millions), repayment of which was not demanded by the Treaty. A possible risk—the non-payment by Germany of all or part of the reparations debt (about 350,000 millions), which she was called upon to pay. It was to these two factors—the one unavoidable, the other uncertain—that the principle of unity could be applied if suitable agreement was forthcoming.

Digitized by Google

Nothing more simple, it would seem, or more just and, without reference to prejudiced criticism which counts for nothing, many impartial minds have expressed surprise that such an agreement was not reached. Hence in a recent report to the League of Nations, Professor Charles Gide wrote: "The favourable opportunity was allowed to slip by....; the solution would probably have been easy if the Powers had taken it up between themselves during the war. When, in May, 1918, they resolved to have only one army and only one commander-in-chief, it would have been easy to persuade them that they should have only one purse." If M. Charles Gide had gone through the unheard-of difficulties of one and the other, he might not have written the foregoing lines. Unity of command? It took forty-five months of warfare and the menace of an impending catastrophe for it to be theoretically entertained.* After it was once adopted, it was only by halting and laborious stages that it was put into practice, and I might quote certain instances, contemporaneous with the Armistice, to prove that, even after it had been justified by victory certain restrictions were still applied to it. If when he created it, M. Clemenceau did not think it wise to complicate the discussion by demanding unity of another kind; if, in the city hall of Doullens and during the days which followed the historic morning of March 26, 1918, he said nothing about unity of finances, it was because he knew too well, like all our war Governments, that he would thereby have irremediably compromised the demand for unity of military command upon which the issue of the battle depended. It was because he knew that, while the Allies were individualist as regards military command, they were even more so as regards financial matters and that, until the end of hostilities, the treasuries of each country should remain the impregnable castles of national individualism.

I cannot tell here the financial history of the war. At least I may, by a few facts, throw light upon my assertions.

*See Chapter II, pages 37-42.

Digitized by Google

Consider France and the United States. I have often reminded my fellow countrymen as a striking example of American brotherhood of the 15,000 million francs (50,000 millions at the 1920 rate of exchange) lent us by the Federal Treasury. What difficulties had to be overcome, however, from day to day in order to secure this generous cooperation! Recollect first of all that at no time was a fixed credit opened in advance either to ourselves or to our European Allies. An advance of 100 million dollars was granted M. Viviani at the end of April, 1917, without promise of a renewal. On my arrival in Washington, on May 15, of the same year, this was the first thing I had to take up. Thereafter at intervals of a month, sometimes of a fortnight, my colleagues and I obtained the necessary credits. On each occasion long explanations had to be furnished as to how these credits were to be expended. As far as France was concerned part of these credits were to enable us to pay for the purchases by the French Government in the United States. To this, of course, no objection was raised. But we were obliged to make over part of the credits to England for payment in dollars which she was making for our account outside of the United States and to transfer part of the credits to the order of the Bank of France to cover the difference in exchange on private purchases. Until the end of the war, these transfers aroused uneasiness and called forth the protests of the Treasury. In January, 1918, the fact that our cash balance showed a surplus brought down severe reproaches upon us. A little later I met the most serious opposition to the repayment by means of the American dollars of some of our loans raised in 1915 and 1916, to renew which would have been absolute folly. On all these occasions the Treasury impressed by the immensity of its task and anxious not to exceed the appropriations voted by the Congress, hesitated for whole weeks to authorize on behalf of the Allies, operations which were in the interests of all. We were working from hand to mouth, almost always obtaining what we

Digitized by Google

needed but without being able to count upon this empiric and cordial assistance to build up a general plan.

Then came another matter—the so-called "purchase question." America had purchased from us a certain quantity of war material. In addition, her troops becoming more and more numerous in France caused her to be in need of francs (over 800 millions in May, 1918,) which were provided by the French Treasury which thereby added heavily to its circulation against payment in dollars. Our Ministry of Finance considered that the dollars derived from these two sources were our property, and that for our purchases in the United States the Federal Treasury should continue to loan to us as to the other Allies without deducting the dollars owing to us for purchases either of material or of francs. The American Secretary of the Treasury, on the other hand, contended in view of the overwhelming burden he was bearing that dollars, no matter from what source, should be applied wherever they were required without discrimination. He did not admit that France was entitled to reserve funds for future use and receive advances at one and the same time. He considered that such advances should be strictly limited to the difference between the amount of our purchases in America and the available funds representing the proceeds of sales. This disagreement gave birth to an extraordinary discussion. As in all cases where Americans were concerned we managed to effect a working compromise without ever reaching an agreement in principle. We obtained, in July, 1917, an additional credit of 200 million dollars and, in the following month of November the introduction of a bill into the American Congress authorizing certain advances for our reconstruction purchases. However, on the legal point—"compensation" or "non-compensation"—both Treasuries invariably remained obdurate, each taking its stand on its own doctrines of financial autonomy, each doing its utmost to win the war, but unwilling to give up any of its cherished principles. The sincere desire on the part of the Federal Treasury, notwithstanding the splendid assistance which

Digitized by Google

it kept giving to its associates, was to do nothing that might be construed either in war or in peace as a general undertaking.

Now, let us make no mistake about this. Stripped of its disguise of words and transformed into plain figures, the idea of financial unity, as regards the settlement of the cost of the war, had but one meaning—an appeal to the American Treasury with a view to its acceptance of additional liability. The facts, which I have mentioned, prove that such an appeal before the Armistice would have had no chance of being entertained; afterwards it had still less. The war had just cost America, who claimed nothing in regard to reparations, over 24,000 million dollars. Congress thought the price high and did not want to go further. After the elections in November, 1918, the policy of non-participation in the affairs of Europe was prompted both by a spontaneous desire of a part of public opinion, and to the deliberate determination to oppose the President. Moreover any financial unity, and this was a mere matter of arithmetic, would have obliged the United States to pay not only for France, but for Great Britain as well,—a thing the Americans were not disposed to do. In short, although the principle of financial unity had justice and logic in its favour, and although from an onlooker's point of view its failure is to be regretted, I venture to say without fear of being contradicted by any of those who, like myself, belonged to the Government during the struggle, that its mere enunciation would have led to a point-blank refusal which might have had disastrous consequences. Furthermore, if the confirmation of facts is desired for this opinion, the following will enlighten the reader.

From the very start of the Conference, both among its members and outside, the question of unity was carefully studied in its various aspects. I can scarcely enter here into a detailed examination of these different proposals which, as will be seen hereafter, were all destined to meet the same fate. It must also be noted that none was free

Digitized by Google

from serious shortcomings. In each case, whatever method was applied to the solution of the question of financial unity, those who were called upon to pay for the others or commit themselves in their stead, maintained the doctrine of financial autonomy so jealously adhered to during the war. Every nation must meet its own liabilities—such was the principle invariably maintained. It was soon to be asserted in peremptory manner.

At the beginning of March, 1919, it was rumoured in Washington that the question of the pooling of liabilities had been approached in Paris and on the eighth I received from M. Edouard de Billy, who had succeeded me as High Commissioner of France, a cable in which he communicated a letter received by him the same day from Mr. Rathbone, Assistant Secretary of the United States Treasury. This letter, after recalling that at a meeting of the Commission M. Klotz had supported a suggestion to divide the whole of the war debt among the Allies, continued:

> I must inform you in the clearest manner that the United States Treasury which as you know has been invested by Congress with full power in the matter of advances made by it to Foreign Governments will not consent to any discussion in the Peace Conference or elsewhere of any project or agreement having for object the liquidation, consolidation or repartition on a new basis of the obligations of Foreign Governments towards the United States.
>
> You will also understand that the United States Treasury could not think of continuing advances to any Allied Government supporting a scheme which would result in making uncertain the payment at maturity of advances already made by the United States Treasury.
>
> I shall be obliged if you will communicate this view of the Treasury to your Government and I await its early reply.

As the Allied Governments were all in great need of further American advances and none of them was in a position immediately to repay former credits, they could not ignore this communication. In a very plain answer I asserted on behalf of the French Government the right, after the immense sacrifices France had made, to have and

Digitized by Google

to hold any opinion we thought proper. Mr. Rathbone agreed with me, and the matter rested there. I only mention it to show how easily and to what extent, both before and after the Armistice, the susceptibilities of the Treasuries were aroused whenever they feared that an international agreement might aggravate the already very heavy burdens assumed by their Parliaments. It was under these circumstances that the scheme for a financial section of the League of Nations, very properly presented by M. Klotz, was referred to the Executive Council in a somewhat vague form to which the Brussels Conference of 1920 did not succeed in giving definite shape.* The hour of financial unity had not struck. Any pressure designed to hasten it would have precipitated conflict instead of bringing about the desired unity. Long and prudent preparation was necessary especially with the Americans upon whom, as I have shown, success depended. Plans for this preparation occupied a goodly part of the time of President Wilson and his co-workers, who well knew our anxieties and our desires, before they left Paris.

The undertaking was difficult. When Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Rathbone, a true and devoted friend of France as he had proved by his conduct during the war, wrote the letter of March 8, which I have quoted above, he was only somewhat harshly stating an impossibility. Let there be no mistake about that. If to share the burdens of Europe, the Wilson Administration had asked the Congress elected on the fifth of November, 1919, to vote credits, it would not have voted a cent; first out of antagonism to the President, then from a feeling of Americanism, and finally because it was not possible under the circumstances. Before the war, Americans were not used to Government bonds; still less to the securities of foreign Governments. Government securities were in the hands of a very few men. In order to float the war loans tremendous advertis-

*It is right to remark that a considerable portion of the powers conferred by the Klotz plan to the Financial Section of the League of Nations has been effectively conferred by the Treaty to the Reparations Commission.

Digitized by Google

ing campaigns had been necessary. Furthermore the increase of taxation while making investors prefer tax-free securities, had depressed the market already glutted by these loans and restricted its purchasing capacity. An appeal for money to pay off European liabilities with the help of the United States would have been a dismal failure.

President Wilson knew this better than anyone and that is why, anxious as he was to help his European associates, he was obliged to be extremely cautious. I have told the part he played in the discussion on the bonds to be issued by Germany.* There he had showed his desire to help Europe, to mobilize the German debt, and to associate his country with the financial enforcement of the peace. It was to facilitate the sale of German bonds in America that he asked that they should be issued only gradually. It was with his consent that the clause was inserted in the Treaty authorizing the allotment of these bonds to others than the Governments of countries which had suffered devastation. He had, in a word, as far as these bonds were concerned, foreseen and accepted the participation of the United States in two ways. First by discount and second by purchase. For the European Governments this was a valuable asset and it is difficult to understand why for so many months they never sought to avail themselves of it. In Mr. Wilson's mind, America, if properly approached, could do even more and better.

In the beginning of May one of Mr. Wilson's financial advisers, Mr. Lamont, expressed his point of view to me as follows:

"The President," he said to me, "understands perfectly that the United States must help in the economic reconstruction of Europe. It is the interest of America as well as its duty to hasten the end of the financial crisis and to help Europe, especially France and Great Britain, to pass through it.

"I have handed Mr. Wilson at his request a long memorandum on this subject, but nothing practical can be done

*See Chapter IX, page 312.

Digitized by Google

until the problem has been thoroughly explained to the American people who have no conception of it, and as far as I can see the President is the only man who has sufficient authority to educate the country to it. But he will not be able to undertake this task until the Treaty is ratified.

"For the time being, we must have patience. If we go too fast, we shall only be giving an additional weapon to the opponents of the Treaty. The new taxes which are being introduced by M. Clemenceau's Cabinet will moreover be an indispensable factor in the campaign to be conducted in America. For they will give confidence to many Americans who when they see men like J. P. Morgan paying seventy-five per cent. of their income in taxes since the beginning of the war, are astonished that France has not increased its taxation, without understanding that the devastation of your richest provinces has made such an increase more difficult for you than for other countries."

During the month of June, I had several conversations on the same subject with Mr. House and Mr. Lamont. We knew that we could not pass from theory to practice, but we were preparing possible solutions. It is thus that we considered the advantages and feasibility of a solution of which Mr. Keynes in his overweening pride has imagined that he is the author. I refer to the cancellation of all war debts. This cancellation would have been a first step towards thoroughgoing financial unity. Others would have followed. America unanimous in not demanding for the time being either the repayment of our debt of $3,000,000,000, or even the interest thereon, was quite capable of taking such a step, if its consequences had been fully explained. That is what Mr. Wilson intended to undertake immediately after his campaign for the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles. We all know what happened. The illness of the President, stricken down for ten months; the rejection of the Treaty by six votes; the triumph of an opposition which favours American isolation. The result is that in 1920 we are further from our goal than in 1919. The Allies are partly responsible for this by having omitted

Digitized by Google

for ten months to enforce upon Germany the obligation to issue the bonds in their favour as provided for in the Treaty and by the right which they recognized to Germany at Spa to issue bonds in her own favour. Between France and Great Britain the situation is the same. The French Government having neglected to issue in London the French loan of which M. Clemenceau on the eve of his retirement had obtained the promise for March, 1920, each country works for itself. The idea of unity which the peace-makers were about to realize is in eclipse. Will men be found to restore it to life and light?

IV

No financial unity. So there remained for the greatest sufferers—that is to say for France—the resource of priority. In truth this resource had lost its importance and its chances of success the day when the Council of Four had decided to claim from Germany damages to persons and property and pensions, but not the costs of war.*

It had lost its importance for, with the exception of British tonnage sunk, the whole of the claims was henceforth identical with the French claims and even if sea losses were considered last—to which Great Britain would, of course, not consent—our country would have derived but little advantage. It had no chance of success because, however ready everyone was to recognize the immensity of the losses suffered by France, no Government would admit that for an indefinite number of years France alone should receive compensation, the others coming in only after she had been completely paid; because, furthermore, nations like Australia, which had suffered no devastations and could show only losses in men, would not admit that property losses should take precedence over losses of life. No matter what efforts the French delegation put forth, it was beaten in advance; for it was in a minority of one. In these circumstances it was clear that the basis of agreement would have to be percentages taking into account on a slid-

*See Chapter IX, pages 286-294.

Digitized by Google

ing scale the various degrees of losses sustained; and that even on this basis agreement would be reached only after prolonged discussions.

The discussion began in March before the Special Committee appointed to deal with financial questions and before the Council of Four. It was a painful one. Who was to have the largest share of the German payments? That really meant who had suffered most; who had worked hardest; who had contributed most to victory? This led to a discussion of respective estimates. As Mr. Lloyd George said on March 25, it was no longer a question of the coincidence but of the competition of Allied interests. Public opinion also had to be taken into account. The British Prime Minister dreaded this discussion, because he knew how imprudently the election campaign of 1918 had aroused the hopes of his countrymen. He dreaded it also because of the Dominions which had played an admirable part in the war and who, already obliged to forego the repayment of their war expenses, would never at any price have admitted that damages to property should be paid before their pensions.

"By what right," they asked, "should French chimneys be paid for before British lives?"

Finally influenced by advisers like Mr. Keynes and also by French pre-war publications put out by those very economists who had so learnedly proved that a European war could not last more than three months, Mr. Lloyd George was of opinion that the French claims were excessive.

"After all," he said, "the portion of your territory that has been devastated is very limited compared to your whole country. It contains no large towns. Lille and Valenciennes were occupied and more or less looted, but not destroyed. The total you arrive at is so large, that it nearly equals your whole national wealth, which was estimated at 250,000 millions in 1908. If the amount you claim represents the damages in so limited a portion of French territory, France must be very much richer than we believed.

Digitized by Google

"The value of all the coal mines in Great Britain was estimated before the war at 130,000,000 pounds (3,250,000,000 francs) and according to you, your mines which are of secondary importance as compared to ours need 2,000,000,000 francs for repairs.* How do you account for that?

"If you had to spend the money which you ask for the reconstruction of the devastated regions of the North of France, I assert that you could not manage to spend it. Besides the land is still there. Although it has been badly upheaved in parts it has not disappeared. Even if you put the Chemin des Dames up to auction, you would find buyers. What France claims is not fair to her Allies."

Refuting his opponents' arguments inch by inch M. Loucheur replied:

"France has no intention of taking a dollar more than is her due. She is ready to accept any verification of the figures she puts forward. But you are very much mistaken if you think that such verification will lead to any marked reduction.

"You produce statistics of our estimated wealth in 1908. I repudiate them. They are merely the individual opinions of economists, and are contradicted by the facts. Just think what real estate in Paris alone is worth. Bear in mind that after most careful investigation I am convinced that the repair of our coal mines in the North will cost at least 2,000 million francs. Bear in mind that it will take ten years and a million men to rebuild what has been destroyed. Bear in mind that in the Lens-Courrières district there are 12,000 houses to rebuild which before the war were worth 5,000 francs apiece and are now worth 15,000 francs.

"You say that we exaggerate the rise in prices. That is not true. You would have us calculate reconstruction of buildings at one hundred per cent.; and yet you are well aware that certain materials cost three or four times as

*This French estimate, correct in March, 1919, had in December, 1920, revealed itself as less than half the actual cost of reconstruction.

Digitized by Google

much in 1919 as they did in 1914. Anyhow, just take the raw material stolen or destroyed by the enemy. The wool taken by the Germans from Roubaix cannot be replaced for less than five times its 1914 value.

"France asks only the actual cost of repairs, neither more nor less.

"Reference has been made to the drawbacks of a public discussion. We do not fear it and we fear still less the comparison between our figures and those proceeding from the arbitrary estimates of more or less competent economists."

And so our fundamentally different points of view came into sharp conflict again when reduced to figures. To simplify matters Mr. Lloyd George said:

"Representing what Germany will pay by one hundred, I suggest that France receive fifty, Great Britain thirty, and the other countries twenty. This proportion will give France a very marked preference. But I cannot, in view of British public opinion, go below the proportion I mean to reserve for Great Britain."

At once M. Loucheur declared that this proposal was inacceptable. He recalled that France had already made a concession in not insisting upon priority, and after asserting that he would accept no other proportion than fifty-eight for France and twenty-five for Great Britain, he said his last word: fifty-six to twenty-five. The American experts suggested fifty-six to twenty-eight. M. Loucheur said no, and in agreement with M. Clemenceau declared:

"On my conscience I cannot agree to what is not fair. I am sorry to seem uncompromising, but I have already gone further than my instruction, and further than what I honestly believe to be just and fair."

The discussion ended without agreement. Eight months passed, during which France and Great Britain both refrained from widening this discussion, as it would necessarily have been complicated by the intervention of countries which either had not taken part in the war from the

Digitized by Google

beginning, or had been at war for a portion of the time only with but one of our four enemies.

On December 12, 1919, in London, the conversation was resumed. M. Loucheur recalled its origin and on the ground of the continual rise in prices, asserted that to obtain a fair settlement, the ratio of sixty to twenty would be preferable to that of fifty-six to twenty-five, which he had been willing to admit in March. He added, "We are going to have to spend 125,000 millions in five years in order to rebuild what was the battlefield of all the Allies." M. Clemenceau also recalled that in the course of the debate on the ratification of the Treaty the French Parliament had complained of the inadequacy of the financial reparations given to France. He himself had admitted in the Senate, on October 11, that he was not satisfied and returning to his first demand he said:

"I have been told that British lives were worth more than chimneys destroyed in France. I know what your sacrifices have been, and no one respects them more than I do. But I ask you not to forget that beneath those chimneys there lived French families which the war has broken and ruined. Ten departments, the richest in France, have been completely devastated and for many years will produce nothing. That is the essential cause of our financial and economic crisis. So I demand priority, and I demand it frankly and clearly. Priority such as was given to Belgium. It will be just as fair in the case of France as it was in the case of Belgium. Priority is for us an urgent necessity. Above all you must safeguard the moral value of mutual good feeling between France and England."

Mr. Lloyd George's answer was full of dignity and of feeling. He said:

"The British Government cannot concede France's claim to priority. If it cannot, it is certainly not because the British people do not realize the unequalled sufferings of France. They know them fully. But Great Britain is beset by serious financial difficulties. Public opinion is overwrought by the burden of heavy taxes, and because it

Digitized by Google

has not received a farthing from Germany. I ask the French Government to look at the matter in this light.

"France has put in a claim for 125,000 millions and Belgium for 25,000 millions. If priority for damages to persons and property is granted to France, it will have to be granted to Belgium, which amounts to saying that about 175,000 millions will be paid before the British taxpayer obtains any relief, that is for at least thirty years. I cannot accept such a thing.

"And the Australian Prime Minister will not accept it either. Australia with a population of less than four and a half million inhabitants has lost more men in the war than the United States. Australia has a heavy debt entirely due to war expenses and pensions. New Zealand, with a population of a million, had more men killed than Belgium and she also has a heavy debt. I ask you to take these brave young nations into consideration.

"In the Reparations Commission we must not have discussions between France and England on every question. France and Great Britain must hold together and act together. Our alliance must go on after having stood the test of the greatest war in history.

"To settle, we accept a proportion of fifty-five to twenty-five. We believe this proportion is too low for us. However, to assert and safeguard the cordial relations between our two countries, my colleagues and I are ready to accept it and we on the other hand ask that France do not insist upon priority.

"I ask this of you above all so that, in the case of another conflict, the feeling of unity of the Dominions be not less keen than it was last time."

It was necessary to settle and some of the English arguments were strong. M. Clemenceau accepted. To save the feelings of Allies who were not represented at the Conference at London the proportion of eleven to five was substituted in the official minutes for the percentage of fifty-five to twenty-five which remained the basis of the agreement. Twenty per cent. was to be reserved for the

Digitized by Google

other creditors in accordance with Mr. Lloyd George's original suggestion. M. Clemenceau obtained in addition to this two other results from which his successors have not derived the benefit they might. First the attribution to France of the Chairmanship of the Reparation Commission (it is common knowledge that in less than six months the chairmanship of this all important Commission has been changed three times) and the issue in London in March, 1920, of a big French loan (it is common knowledge that this loan was not issued). So the financial problem as a whole was thus settled between France and Great Britain. Our country did not obtain that general priority which as the battleground of the nations it had a right to claim. But the percentage adopted assured it more than half the total of everything Germany was to pay.

The very terms of the Treaty assured it of even more. First everything in our list of damages that could be recovered in its original state (money, cattle, machinery or materials) did not enter into the reparations account and was not to be included in the percentage. Nine thousand million francs' worth of such stolen goods have been already recovered and have of course come back to us in full priority. Well conducted search would increase this amount. On the other hand the immediate payment promised to Belgium must also in part be added to the percentage allotted to France by the agreement of London, for half of the amounts loaned to our friends were loaned by us. Finally the reimbursement before any other charges of the cost of the Armies of Occupation will still further increase the amounts we shall receive, for of the costs of occupation it is not fifty-five per cent. but more than eighty per cent. that we are entitled to.

Since then at Spa the bases of the percentages have been changed. In order to increase the share of other Powers, France and Great Britain have consented to reduce their own each by three per cent., France's share falling from fifty-five per cent. to fifty-two per cent. and Great Britain's share from twenty-five per cent. to twenty-two

Digitized by Google

per cent. The origins and character of this agreement make comment of mine superfluous. France, after having given up the priority which her rôle as battlefield entitled her to claim and accepted the reduction of the share allotted to her of the total German payments, is doubly bound to insist that this total must remain exactly as defined by the Treaty. A reduced share of a full total? Yes. But a reduced share of a reduced total? No. That is the whole problem. After so many others, it is an additional reason for France to refuse the onerous changes improvised and suggested in various quarters.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI

GERMAN UNITY

Since the signing of the Treaty strong criticism has been directed in France against the Government of Victory. "You have," it is asserted, "retaken Alsace-Lorraine. You have freed the French of the Sarre. You have occupied the left bank of the Rhine. You have imposed rigorous military and financial clauses upon Germany. That is all very well, but it is nothing. Why? Because none of these guarantees has any permanent value so long as you have allowed German unity to remain untouched." Let me add that a very distinguished American writer, Mr. W. Morton Fullerton, asked some years ago and in the same spirit that "France be permitted in the name of civilization to proceed to the vivisection of Germany, *i. e.*, to the dismemberment of the Germanic tribes."

Before going back to the roots of the matter I must first present the answer which the French Government publicly made to this criticism in October, 1919. M. Clemenceau, attacked in the Senate by two members of the Right, presented the French view, which was the same as that of the Allies. Here is what he said:—

> A great quarrel has been thrust upon this assembly,—the famous question of German unity. On that I do not agree with you,—not in the least. Therefore, it is a question on which we must have a clear explanation.

On what was this disagreement? Not, of course, on the interest France has in not having at her gates sixty million people who claim German nationality and whom history has taught us to know: but on the possibility of

Digitized by Google

destroying their unity by force. All Frenchmen would prefer not to be exposed to the risk of this proximity. But the proximity exists. It may be regretted. We all regret it, just as we regret that France has not the protection against Germany which the ocean affords England. But regret cannot alter a fact, and the one and only political question for Governments is whether or not this fact can be done away with. That is what the French Prime Minister proceeds to discuss, after brushing away the asinine criticism which a certain Press had levelled against him and his Cabinet of deliberately seeking to maintain German unity.

"I think you do me the honour to believe that I am no advocate of German unity, that I desire to split up the German forces..... But, just what is it that we have to deal with?

"Consider a minute! There is a nation of sixty million people which only yesterday had seventy millions. People whose history goes back for centuries. By one of those contradictions which I am not called upon to explain, because it is the business of the Almighty, the Germans have gone from the one extreme of particularism to the other extreme of centralization. I cannot help it. It is their nature. They are built that way!

"At certain moments in history attempts have been made to force their national conscience. Napoleon, for instance, at Leipzig, had Saxons with him. It is impossible to be more divided than the Germans were then; for they were using shot and shell on other Germans ..... What did the Saxons do at Leipzig? You are not without knowing! (*Cheers.*)

"The only true unity is that of the heart (*Hear! hear!*) and that no human hand can touch.

"Unity, you see, is not a matter of diplomatic protocols. Unity is in the hearts of men. Men love those they love. Men hate those they hate; and in times of danger they know on which side to stand, and in times of battle too. (*Hear! hear!*)

"What would you? There are there, whether we like it or not, sixty million people with whom we have to live. In olden days I don't know what would have been done with them. The Romans themselves broke their sword upon them. We are not going to throw ourselves into any such adventure.

Digitized by Google

"We want to respect their liberty, but we mean to take the necessary precautions to make them respect ours." (*Cheers and applause.*)

And M. Clemenceau, appealing to the past, recalled how pregnant with disappointment for France had been the theory of the "two Germanies."

"I remember when war was declared in 1870. One met journalists in the street—there are always journalists ready to say anything (*laughter*)—who said 'Bavaria will not join.'

"What reasons I heard given! 'The Bavarians are Celts—Their heads are not the same shape as the Prussians—They hate the Prussians.' Two days later you know what happened.

"And in 1914, was not Bavaria precisely in the position where she would be to-day according to your theory, had she signed the Treaty? Did she hesitate to join? No.

"In peace time I used to believe that I should die without seeing the war, but I knew it was coming and I made it my duty to go every year either to Austria or to Germany. There I talked with the people. I saw those who were dissatisfied. I went to Munich and talked with the Bavarians. When I said harsh things of the Prussians they approved. They even went farther than I did. But when a break was referred to, it was quite another matter.

"And beaten do you think they are going to think differently than if they had won? Quite the contrary! (*Cheers.*)

"Defeat has brought their scattered forces together. Never in this respect had the situation called for such an effort."

If it be possible that some day, under the impulse of new interests and new ideas, this moral unity may disappear and give place to particularism, it is on the one condition that there be no forceful interference from without and that as in Austria-Hungary the evolution be a spontaneous evolution which we can help along but which we cannot create.

"You see, you must not believe that things will remain where the makers of the Treaty have left them.... The situation created by the Treaty will continue to develop. We shall see its results. We shall watch it. We shall take what advantage we may.

Digitized by Google

"That will depend upon the Germans—which some are trying to convert and rightly so—but it will depend upon us also. (*Cheers.*)

"If we hope that the Germans—I do not want to use a harsh word—will disintegrate in the political sense of the word so that they may not all be led at some future time to make war upon us, it by no means follows that we wish this disintegration for purposes of dominating them as they dreamed they were going to dominate us.

"As for going into Germany, as for conquering Germany as Napoleon conquered Spain, it is a waste of time even to think about it."

In other words take advantage of political disintegration in Germany, if it takes place spontaneously; but do not commit the mad imprudence of imposing this disintegration by force,—such a course would merely strengthen the spiritual bonds; for "a nation," as Renan said, "is a group of individuals who will to live together" and this will cannot be broken by force. This opinion, held in common by all the Allied Governments, was sustained time and time again in the Senate by M. Clemenceau and in the Chamber by myself. It was an opinion so natural and so clear from the very facts that, as M. Clemenceau declared, in his speech of October 2, 1919: "The question was settled at the Conference almost before it had been presented."

II

For this point of view history—often quoted against it—affords absolute justification. Much has been said in discussing the Treaty of Versailles about the Treaties of Westphalia of 1648, which have been extolled at the expense of the former. Only one thing has been forgotten, that from 1648 to 1919, Germany continued to live and was profoundly changed in the course of those two and a half centuries. Whereas in Austria historic evolution prepared and produced the divorce of subject nationalities, in Germany on the contrary the whole process of evolution

Digitized by Google

tended towards unity. Not the slightest tendency toward disintegration manifested itself during the war; and the overthrow of the dynasties has dispelled the last vestiges of constitutional particularism. While in Austria the wills of the peoples tended to diverge, in Germany they constantly tended to converge. All German history, since the seventeenth century, illustrates and emphasizes this phenomenon.

Bismarck created German unity—an achievement which gives the full measure of his genius. But Bismarck did not create it alone, and his genius does not account for all German unity. Bismarck worked not on an untouched canvas but upon one into which had been woven for more than a century a state of mind born of abject misery resulting from the seventeenth century treaties—a state of mind nurtured and trained for one hundred and fifty years by all German writers, inflamed by the Napoleonic wars, generalized by the events of 1848. Bismarck in other words utilized with marvelous ability an aspiration—a need—that existed before his time; a need that Prussia succeeded in satisfying and in exploiting; a need whence German unity even without Bismarck would sooner or later have sprung, without which Bismarck would have been unable to realize it. Destroy Bismarck's work? An easy thing to say, but a vain undertaking if what is the very soul of his work be not first destroyed. Is that destruction possible? That is the whole question. To that question two hundred and seventy years of history—too often ignored by those whose historical inquiries stop at the Treaty of Westphalia—give answer.

Germany by the end of the seventeenth century had reached the extreme limit of disintegration. More than a hundred independent States side by side led a miserable existence under powerless princes—vassals of a phantom empire. Of public spirit there was none—only moral disunion worse than material division, only economic stagnation aggravated by intellectual decadence, emphasized by boorish manners and general ignorance. Only the lower

Digitized by Google

classes spoke German. This political system had a name, the "Germanic Liberties." In order to understand what modern Germany thinks of these liberties we must remember what they stood for in the Germany of the past.

A few spirits lost in this darkness retained, by personal effort, their individuality shorn however of all national influence. To them is due the origin of the movement whence after many evolutions was one day to come the then unsuspected notion of a German Fatherland. To tell the truth this notion in its modern form was foreign to these solitary thinkers. But in their struggle for the advancement of literature and science they held the torch for future generations. Leibnitz was the first to extol intellectual activity without which, he said, "the downfall and decay of our nation will be irreparable for a long time to come." A few years later, appeared the first review published in German, to the scandal of its contemporaries. It was followed by another periodical, *The Hamburg Patriot,* the success of which astonished its readers and even its founders. Local awakenings of no political or national importance, but which showed the trend.

The eighteenth century sees the growth and expansion of this renaissance whose results have so far surpassed all expectations. Wolf, "the schoolmaster of the German mind," as Hegel called him later; the mediocre Gottsched ever reacting against foreign manners but stubborn and popular champion of German science; the University of Goettingen, first centre of culture for a middle class hitherto non-existent,—pave the way for Klopstock and Lessing, the earliest classical writers of Germany. Steeped in the philosophy of their century, they share its humantarian and cosmopolitan spirit. But they write in German and for Germans, so their work is already national. The whole scene is dominated by the extraordinary figure of Frederick the Great, resourceful and unscrupulous, holding his own against Europe. Even those who do not love him are proud of this Prussian,—more Prussian than German. His victories awake echoes beyond his kingdom, all over

Digitized by Google

the Holy Empire. The young generation at Frankfort worships him. Patriotic writings that borrow their titles from the past increase in number. The "Germanies" begin to discover a community of thought and feeling, they thrill with a new-born desire to foster it.

Towards the end of the century the movement gains breadth and scope. It is the moment when Herder proclaims the inward character of the German spirit and language. "Awake," he cries, "O slumbering God! awake O German People." Then there come Goethe, Schiller and Kant, initiators and masters of German thought. The Fatherland of which they speak is more ideal than material. It is an intellectual community whose body politic is as yet unformed. But under the influence of the French ideas of 1789, this Fatherland begins to crystallize in men's minds and around the idea—thrilling indeed to this land of poverty and misery—of the rights of man and of the individual. The masses still remain indifferent. But the Napoleonic wars are going to awaken them. Eighteen hundred and six sees Jena. Kant had died two years before, bequeathing to his countrymen his philosophy of duty. Fichte takes hold of it and makes it the very soul of a frankly and exclusively national propaganda. He declares himself to be "German and nothing but German." He speaks for "all Germans without exception." He preaches that all their misfortunes arose from the "Germanic liberties" which made of Germany the battlefield of Europe. He denounces the princes of the Rhine Confederation as "the gilded slaves of Napoleon." His patriotism is no mere literary concept. It is a thought-power. He has a sense of national unity. He is not afraid of the word. The French Empire by its militarist policy helped to bring into the world the modern German Fatherland. And Fichte was its prophet.

And then in the Prussian Government a minister—not a Prussian by birth—Stein, appropriates this idea and translates it into action. Particularism, there is the enemy! Unity, there is the need! Napoleon has Stein expelled

Digitized by Google

from Prussia, and Stein's authority grows greater as a result. Against humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism, he clamours for the rights of patriotism. "I have but one country and its name is Germany.... My motto is unity.... Away with the fatal treaties of Westphalia." His voice carries far. On the retreat from Russia, he obliges his hesitating sovereign to launch the *Appeal to My People* of 1813, which beyond Prussia is intended for all Germany. The second of the cards that Bismarck is to play fifty years later appears. The German idea is marching on! But besides, in 1813, it is Prussia which,—followed but little or not at all by the others,—fights for this idea, thereby gaining an unique prestige. Doubtless for many years yet, the policy of reaction expressed in the Holy Alliance is to retard evolution. Stein is in advance of his time. The princes do not support him. But he gives an impulse to the people, and his political testament is in the minds of all who think—"To be strong, Germany must be united."

From 1815 to 1848 the outward lines of politics remain rigid. But minds are in a ferment. The courts—even the Prussian Court draws back from the advantages that await it—repudiate unity as revolutionary. Professors and writers, however, think of nothing else. They seek its distant origin in the history of the Middle Ages. They show its present necessity by the risk Germany ran of being absorbed by Napoleon. All the élite helps. The university of Berlin becomes a centre of German patriotism. Theory is abandoned for practice. Heed is paid to frontiers. The Rhine is not enough, some demand the Meuse. The Treaties of 1815 are denounced as a spoliation, for which lack of unity is blamed. Hatred of France is already the favourite food of this raging patriotism. "Unity, Unity," cries Arndt, "unity as energetic as possible is what Germany needs; that is what is essential both to her security abroad and to her prosperity at home." And Görres anticipating Bismarck, adds: "It must be realized, if need be, by blood and the iron."

From this time with ever increasing force, the idea of

Digitized by Google

unity keeps marching on. Having suffered overlong from her disintegration and proudly confident of her future, Germany is ready to make good the words of the Prussian Treitschke, "We have no German Fatherland, and the Hohenzollerns alone can give us one." In 1830, Bismarck, a Prussian junker, meets an American and makes a bet with him that before another generation unity will be an accomplished fact. The Parliament of Frankfort, under the illusion that it could realize this unity by vote, offers the crown to Frederick William, who refuses it. This is the last blunder before the battle is won. Bismarck comes into power and henceforth goes straight to his goal, which is not that of the German princes but that of the German people. All things are made to serve his purpose—the centuries of misery, the dreams of philosophers and of poets; the memories of the trials of 1906; the avidity of the middle classes of the South and West—to whom by the Zollverein he ensures larger revenues than those they get from their own customs; universal suffrage established as a menace against Austria and the princes; the war of the Duchies and the Bohemian campaign which excludes the Hapsburgs from Germany and reconciles them to this exclusion by leaving them their boundary; finally the absurdity of Napoleon III, who, by his policy of the "Three Germanies," supplies Prussia with the national pretext from which war is to come on the day of her choice.

"From the moment the Confederation of the South is formed," said Bismarck on April 10, 1867, "and Germany has but two national Parliaments, no human force can keep them from uniting, any more than the waters of the Red Sea remained apart after the crossing of the people of Israel." The end is known. Another and inexcusable error on the part of Napoleon III in connection with the Spanish question; the cynical Ems forgery; the Franco-German war; Versailles; the King of Bavaria bullied and brought to terms—and the Empire is founded. A result of opportunism which satisfies neither the Conservatives, who wanted Prussia to absorb Germany, nor the Liberals, who

Digitized by Google

wanted Germany to absorb Prussia; a patchwork construction of give and take designed to overcome the resistance of the princes; without standing in international law; but the work of the past rather than the work of Bismarck; the tardy fruit of the combined efforts of poets and people whereby, for two hundred years, Germany has sought to free herself from those alleged "Liberties"—hated for more than a century—in which the pretentious verbiage of some contemporary historians seeks to find compensation for her defeat. The people—"that multitude of invisible souls" of which Bismarck speaks in one of his letters—is won over in advance to the end no matter what the means. It shows it by plunging, North and South alike, into the war against France, which is to cement its recent unity. Bismarck is the genius who directs this great adventure, but he is not its creator. Unity existed before him in the souls of the people; he set it free rather than imposed it. Sooner or later, I repeat, even without him, it would have been achieved. Fashioned by him, its principle survived him just as its principle had preceded him.

Then for nearly half a century, this Empire, born of blood and iron, succeeded in giving unequalled satisfactions to the whole of Germany—to the Germany of thinkers as well as to the Germany of doers. For the first, it makes German thought radiate through the world. Upon the second, it lavishes the material benefits of which these people for so many centuries have been deprived. Germany establishes herself as the world's school master and commercial traveller. She flaunts the prosperity of her factories, for her goods challenge those of England in all the world-markets; of her banks, for their net-work spreads over two hemispheres; of her shipping, for the lines that furrow the seven seas. In his book of pride, *The Welfare of the German People,* Helfferich proclaims the results: population increased by sixty-three per cent., surplus of births over deaths as high as thirteen per thousand, deposits in banks and savings banks tripled, in twenty-five years reaching a total of 38,000 millions; wages doubled in

Digitized by Google

twenty years; wealth widely distributed; capital values increased fifty per cent. in fifteen years, compared to an increase in population of only twenty-eight per cent.; average production of wheat increased more than thirty per cent. per acre; horse-power energy increased from two to eight millions; stock companies increased from 2,000 to 4,700. A prodigious wealth in which all Germans shared and which after nearly a century justified Arndt's words, "Unity, and unity alone can assure our security abroad and our prosperity at home."

We are far from the philosophers of the eighteenth century. The moral unity which they had conceived flourishes—with what strength!—but is infected by its very success with the most odious materialism. It is the German patriotism of 1914, such as I attempted to describe in the opening pages of this book, with faith only in the brutal might of the mailed fist, cloaking its greed beneath the hypocritical pretenses of a mystical mission terrorizing Alsace-Lorraine captive; a slave to the sword; gloating bestially over the ignoble violence of its soldiery at Saverne. Nothing can be baser, nothing more depressing; but again nothing could be more real. These people are no longer even capable of regretting the principles they had betrayed. Unity for them is no longer an ideal, but a source of profit. They have more to eat, they make more money than in the time of the "Germanic Liberties." For them that is enough. And because it is enough, the whole nation is ready for aggression without a qualm. Not a party hesitates, nor does a single State and this unity in crime is to last up to the end of the war. Some French writers have recently asked themselves whether Germany is really a nation. They are answered by our dead. A nation of prey, yes, but a nation which by its very crimes has proved its existence all too well.

It is true defeat has come, and hopes have been built upon it. It has been thought that perhaps Germany overwhelmed by defeat would lose her attachment to unity. Events have proved the contrary. The imperial catas-

Digitized by Google

trophe has broken the bonds between the share-holders in the German concern and their director. But the corporate relations among the share-holders themselves have only been strengthened as a result. Defeat has not revived the "Germanies" of the past. It has inspired united Germany with the will to find in this unity the instrument of her own revival. The downfall of the dynasties swept away by the autumn gale of 1918 laid low the last pillars of particularism. The deputies at Weimar in framing a new constitution had but one aim,—increased centralization. Does this mean that striking contrasts do not still persist in different parts of Germany? I do not say so and I shall show later the advantage to be derived therefrom. But I do say that the overwhelming majority of the German Nation, whose birth was so long and painful, is determined to live on as a nation, that force can avail nothing against this will, and that separated by the ax of the conqueror, its roots would soon have sought and joined each other for the preparation of a new life to which war would be the preface, as it was fifty years ago.

III

This obvious fact, on which so much discussion has been wasted since the signing of the peace, was never challenged during the war, and the disintegration of German unity was never one of the war aims of the Allies. Really it is hard to see how it could have been. Victory was late in crowning the flags of the Entente. In March, 1918, General Gough's British Army was defeated. In May came the Chemin des Dames and Paris bombarded. To have announced at that moment or earlier what has been called the "vivisection of Germany," would have been a terrible imprudence, would have been playing into the hands of German propaganda. As it was not announced, the Allied Nations were unprepared for it. Moreover to them, grouped as I have shown around the idea of nationality and of the defense of national liberties, the disintegration of a nation—even of an enemy, even of a guilty nation—

Digitized by Google

would not have appealed as a war aim. Everybody wanted to destroy German domination. Nobody contemplated imitating the methods of that domination. The common sense of the people was quick to realize the existence, only too plain, of German nationality. To break up that nationality by forcibly reviving its former parts appeared to everyone impossible. In a war of peoples, which can be won only through the persistent support of the masses, certain cynical contradictions—common in the time of the old monarchies—become not only impossible but dangerous. The idea which gave heart to our soldiers, and led them to victory could not be repudiated without danger. You cannot tear up the things you stand for. The continuity of Allied war aims was, in large measure, the expression of this impossibility.

However this may be, it is a fact that at no time during the war did the Governments, the Parliaments, or even the Press demand the destruction of German unity. On December 30, 1916, and on January 10, 1917, the Powers of the Entente officially made known their views as to the conditions of a victorious peace. I have reproduced these documents above. Not a word can be found in any of them that directly or indirectly makes allusion to Germany's disintegration. One ingenious spirit has thought to discover such an allusion in the phrase, "The Allies repudiate any plan of exterminating 'the German peoples.'" But one has only to read the text over to see that this plural applies to Germany and to Austria. To this proof another even more decisive may be added. In January and February, 1917, M. Aristide Briand, the French Premier, had, in confidential letters to our Ambassadors at Petrograd and London, expressed his views on peace. These were secret documents in which the head of the Government was free to say anything—even things he might have deemed it dangerous to make public. Consult these two letters. They deal in turn, with the questions of Alsace-Lorraine, of the Sarre, of the demilitarization of the left bank of the Rhine, of its occupation. of the creation of an autonomous Rhine-

Digitized by Google

land—all war aims which in 1919 were upheld by M. Clemenceau at the Conference, as they were in 1916 and 1917 by M. Aristide Briand. But of Germany's disintegration they contain not a word—not a word mentioning it or in any way even suggesting it. On the contrary, all the guarantees demanded are demanded against a united Germany, because this unity is a fact and politicians have to deal with facts; because—like M. Clemenceau—M. Aristide Briand evidently held that "the only true unity is that of the heart, which no human hand can touch."

So much for the French Government. Now for Parliament. I have quoted the solemn resolutions passed on June 5 and 6, 1917.* They contain no word either with regard to imposing disintegration upon Germany by the terms of a Treaty, or of any interference in her internal affairs whatsoever. On the contrary, we find in them the assertion, twice repeated, that France is averse to the idea of "enslaving foreign populations," and that she remains "faithful to her ideal of independence and freedom for all peoples." Fifteen months go by and, on December 2, 1918, three weeks after the Armistice, the Commission of Foreign Affairs of the Chamber of Deputies by the unanimous vote of its members, formulates the peace clauses it deems essential to France. We find among them, as in M. Briand's letter of February 16, 1917, Alsace-Lorraine, the Sarre, the autonomous Rhineland, the reparations, but not a line, not a word about destruction of German unity, or refusal to negotiate with the Reich. And it is also against a united Germany that are directed all the guarantees demanded by Marshal Foch in his reports of November 27, 1918, January 10 and March 31, 1919, as well as in his declarations at the plenary meeting of the Conference, May 6, 1918. He refers over and over again to the "German population, naturally united by a common language and therefore by thought, as well as held together by common interest." It is against this community that he deems the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine indispensable.

*See Chapter III, pages 81-82.

Digitized by Google

It was the same with all the Allies. Great Britain is so hostile to the disintegration of Germany that twice, in November and December, 1917, her Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Balfour, speaks strongly against even the very limited dismemberment which would result from the creation of an autonomous and neutral Rhineland. He declared:

> It is pure fancy... Never, at any moment, has such a scheme formed part of the policy of His Majesty's Government. The Government has never been aware that any such scheme was seriously considered by any French politician.

In America, about the same time—December 14, 1917—President Wilson had said without provoking a single criticism in Europe, where his speech was published the next day:

> We have no unjust designs against the German Empire. We do not wish to interfere with her internal affairs. Both courses would be absolutely contrary to our principles.

On January 8, 1918, he read a message to Congress in which he laid down the Fourteen Points, the identity of which with the European war aims I have already shown. Nothing in it about the disintegration of Germany. On the contrary, it contained this clause, which also met no objection in Europe:

> We do not pretend to suggest to Germany the alteration or modification of her institutions.

From then on the only internal guarantee that the President wishes to exact of Germany in addition to the European war aims is the suppression of the military and irresponsible autocracy of the Hohenzollerns and its replacement by a representative Government. He repeats this on April 6, 1918, at Baltimore, and on July 4, at Mount Vernon, insisting upon "the necessity of not negotiating with an arbitrary Power which could independently,

Digitized by Google

secretly and by its sole will disturb the peace of the world." But he speaks neither of destroying Germany's unity, nor of refusing to deal with the Reich, and no one in Europe differs with him. Finally when, on October 12, the Armistice correspondence begins, there is no question even of suppressing the Reich or of negotiating with the States composing it. Moreover, all this correspondence is published from day to day. The Parliaments are sitting. Two important additions to the bases of peace are suggested, demanded, obtained, by England and by France. And no one either in Paris or in London, in the High Command nor in the Governments, nor in the Chambers, says a single word of that disintegration which eight months later is to create a stir in the Parliaments and in the Press.

So the Armistice is reached and its terms are read in Parliament the very day it is signed. It is with the "representatives duly accredited by the *German* Government," that Marshal Foch was authorized to treat on November 5; it is with the "Secretary of State, Erzeberger, President of the *German* delegation acting in accord with the *German* Chancellor," that the Marshal on November 11 discussed and signed the Armistice. The Armistice itself, in Articles 9, 6, 29, 30 and 32, mentions six times, as contracting party, not the States forming the Reich, but the "*German*" Government, or "*Germany.*" Remember that the Armistice is not only military—that it was discussed and reinforced at Versailles by the Governments—that it contains political and financial clauses. All this is public property, and proves conclusively that the Allies did not demand, and had no intention of demanding the destruction of German unity. Nobody protested, either in October or on November 11, even among those who a few months later were to denounce as criminal the action of the Allies in negotiating with the Reich.

The Press itself, though its irresponsibility gave it greater freedom of expression, does not blame the Chambers for accepting what the Government brings to them. It had one very legitimate preoccupation, namely that what

Digitized by Google

was left of Austria-Hungary should not be allowed to unite with Germany. Article 80 of the Treaty of Versailles provided for this. But the disintegration of Germany—the forcible destruction of her unity—does not at all interest the papers. On October 28 we read:

As for imaginary solutions, such as that which consists in believing that Southern Catholic Germany could hold Protestant Prussia in check, these have precisely the same value as the theory of the Three Germanies. M. Rouher, Napoleon III's minister, also asserted that a Germany cut up into three pieces would never unite.

On October 29:

We cannot establish particularism and separatism to order in Germany.

On November 4:

Let us not be deceived. The movement of Germany unity is not yet finished. However desirable a revival of particularism might be for Europe, it is not in that direction the German States as a whole are tending.

On November 5:

The idea of a Southern Catholic Germany including Bavaria and German Austria, has not at all the attraction for us which it possesses in certain quarters. These combinations always possible on paper cannot be realized at will. We cannot knead the German dough to suit our fancy. Besides people are fooling themselves with regard to Bavaria which has only seven million inhabitants, and with regard to the attractive force of the little provincial state of Munich.

Finally, the same day, we find expressed almost word for word the contention put forward by me on September 2, 1919, in the Chamber, and by M. Clemenceau, on October 11 following, in the Senate, on the subject of possible particularism and the eventual influence to be exerted in that direction.

Digitized by Google

In general, these things are either not done at all or are done badly from without. Events have a habit of presenting themselves in unexpected guises and, if we attempt to anticipate them, we run the risk of interpreting them wrongly and taking them at cross-purposes.

I could give quotations of this sort indefinitely. I have chosen these in preference to others, because they cannot be suspected of democratic idealism; for they are all taken from the articles of a Royalist writer, M. Jacques Bainville, whose party has made itself in 1920, the vehement advocate of the disintegration of Germany.

IV

Such the conditions in which the Allies were placed at the Conference. Such the reasons for which they felt that they were faced by a practical impossibility, by a moral factor which, in M. Clemenceau's own words "no human hand can touch," because, as history has shown a hundred times, military force is powerless against spiritual force.

The French Government, especially, was convinced that forcible interference with this state of affairs would be dangerous. How could we forget that the victories of Napoleon and his policy of the Confederation of the Rhine, inspired by that of Mazarin, did more to create a sentiment of unity in Germany than even the preachings of Fichte? How could we forget that Napoleon III, with his policy of the "Three Germanies," proclaimed on the morrow of Sadowa, gave Bismarck the leaven whence four years later sprang the idea of Empire? How could we refuse to recognize, with the Royalist writer I have just quoted, that such things are generally badly done from without and that by thus attempting to destroy a nation, we are certain to strengthen the bonds that hold it together?

Does this mean that there is no hope that a spontaneous awakening of the particularist spirit may some day oppose Prussian preponderance? The French Government thought otherwise and has proved it by its acts. In this respect the

Digitized by Google

French Government was in accord with the views of an American writer, Mr. Baldwin: "If the German Empire broke up into separate states (which is something quite different from the vivisection of the German Empire) it would be an incalculable gain from every point of view." M. Clemenceau and his colleagues felt that it was at once impossible and dangerous to impose this disintegration by force—to employ what M. Hanotaux, an advocate of this method, calls the *"compelle intrare"*—but whenever at any particular point, autonomous tendencies manifested themselves spontaneously they loyally and openly tried to support them. I may add that, on such occasions, the Allied Governments always showed the greatest hesitation—sometimes even the plainest opposition.

One early instance of this is furnished by the affairs of Bavaria. Kurt Eisner had just fallen. The economic situation was critical. Relations with Berlin were strained. The French Government presents the facts and offers to send supply trains direct to Bavaria. Immediately Lord Robert Cecil, Mr. Hoover, and Mr. Lansing raise objections on the ground that arrangements have already been made to this effect, under the Armistice of November 11, with the German Government which is responsible for the payment. Mr. Lansing says:

"I have not the slightest confidence in an expedient which involves interference in the affairs of any country whatsoever."

It is decided to consult the Supreme Economic Council, which replies, "So far as the Council can judge, the proposed measures from the point of view of food supply and finance are neither desirable nor possible." So there was unanimous opposition to our proposal.

On the left bank of the Rhine it has been seen how Great Britain's unswerving refusal, soon followed by that of the United States, had closed the door to the policy of autonomy recommended by France in the only region where it might perhaps, have been immediately applicable.* A

*See Chapter V.

Digitized by Google

significant incident proved, a few weeks later, that our Allies' apprehensions had not been allayed. On Sunday, June 1, 1919, Herr Dorten, a former magistrate, without political experience or authority, put up posters proclaiming himself President of the Rhenish Republic. The same day, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George received from the Commanders-in-Chief of the American and British forces two reports which corroborated each other and gave the impression that this "comic opera incident" had been favourably viewed by the French military authorities. It was the moment when so many people in London and elsewhere were dominated by the fear that Germany would not sign. The next day, June 2, in the afternoon, Mr. Lloyd George began his earnest attempt to make M. Clemenceau give up the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine—a hotbed of intrigues, he declared, and a menace to the peace of Europe. For two weeks M. Clemenceau had to fight step by step to prevent any change in this occupation without which the most determined advocates of the "Rhenish policy" will admit that this policy would be, to say the least, difficult. Once again, anticipation of the future had come near costing us our hold upon the realities. What happened in March, 1920, at the time of the occupation of Frankfort, throws light upon the history of the preceding year.

Even where matters of pure form were involved a similar state of mind had revealed itself. On May 2, 1919, the French Government had proposed that Bavaria and those of the German States which had signed the Treaty of Frankfort, should be called upon to sign the Treaty of Versailles. On the fourth, the Committee to which this proposal had been referred, rejected it; only the French representative voting in its favour. As a matter of fact, it is hard to see just how authority given to Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau to obtain the signature of the Bavarian Government could have altered the general constitution of Germany, or have lessened the German danger for France. So the refusal of the Allies was not a serious matter; but

Digitized by Google

nevertheless, it threw light upon their state of mind. All that France could obtain was the insertion in the preamble to the Treaty, of a sentence which, in spite of the Constitution of Union adopted by the Assembly of Weimar, authorized the resumption of diplomatic relations between the Governments of the Entente and the self-governing States forming part of the German Empire. In accordance with this clause, a French legation was re-established at Munich in 1920.

It must be confessed moreover that, as the Conference progressed, the Allies found many additional reasons for adhering to the policy of non-interference defined in their war aims. Everywhere, from January 15 to June 28, there was anxiety that the victors might not find a German Government to sign. Was this then the moment to reject the one which had come legally into existence as a result of the general elections, and could speak in the name of the Reichstag? The financial clauses because of the enormous sums involved led to a long and difficult discussion. Was it possible without danger of giving Germany a chance to escape from the responsibilities contracted by her as a single nation, to treat, not with her, but with Bavaria, Saxony, Wurtemburg, as well as with all the smaller States composing the Reich—Hamburg, Anhalt, Saxe-Weimar and so many others besides? For the Allies to obtain payment it was necessary that Germany should again begin to produce and to export; but would this be possible, if the organization which was the source of German prosperity were shattered? And again how can force prevail against a mental attitude? What can material power do against a "unity which is of the heart."

In other words, every aspect of the war which the peace was to bring to a conclusion showed Germany united by long and complex responsibilities, and therefore it was necessary—logically, legally and practically—for the Treaty to be applied to that Germany. May I be permitted to add to the recital of past events that when one sees the extremes of indulgence which at times such or such of the

Digitized by Google

Allies have for the duplicity and infractions of a Germany surviving united in all her responsibilities, one wonders what would have happened if it could have been said, if one could say to-day, that by the very terms of the Treaty and by the will of the victors responsible, Germany has ceased to exist.

Thus the Conference went on painfully and laboriously without anything ever arising to modify the broad vision of M. Clemenceau's wisdom: "The only unity is that of the heart and that no human hand can touch." Had it been otherwise, had not this unity asserted itself as enduring, Germany—need I insist upon it?—would have suffered the same fate as Austria-Hungary. But Germany showing no desire for dissolution, the head of the French Government was determined, as were his colleagues, not to "break his sword" in a vain attempt to force it upon her, and he concluded in full agreement with Mr. Lloyd George:

"We all know very well that the best way to work for Germany's disintegration if this be possible, is to take no hand in it."

This was the truth yesterday. It is the truth to-day. It will be the truth to-morrow. Disintegration has not taken place from within. Therefore it would have been, as M. Bainville wrote in November, 1918, imprudent and useless to undertake it from without. If, under the influence of new interests, particularist movements some day arise, they will succeed all the better if their Prussian adversaries cannot point to foreign complicity. They will succeed only on that condition. For, in the matter of nationality, it is as impossible to create by force, as it is to destroy by force. Alsace-Lorraine, Poland and Bohemia have risen from their graves because their souls had never died. The Allies did not wish by the use of violence against a nationality simply to build a fragile edifice upon sand, and so expose themselves to the tragic turn that has overwhelmed the Hapsburg Empire.

The peace did not break Germany into bits, not only because an attempt to do this, which never had any place

Digitized by Google

in the Allied war aims, would have been the negation of all their principles, but also and above all because it would have been impossible. France would far rather not have at her very doors and bound together by a common will and consciousness of unity a people from which she has so often suffered. But the danger of this proximity residing precisely in the unity of these consciences and of these wills, the Peace Conference was powerless against it. If it had agreed to attempt to break it, it would have only strengthened it. If France had attempted this alone, and in spite of her Allies, there would have been no Peace Treaty. We all hope some improvement may be looked for in the future, but it is on the one condition that neither force nor intrigue be brought to bear from without. As Marshal Foch wrote, speaking of the possibility of an evolution of the German mind, in his Memorandum of January 10, 1919: "We shall see such an evolution only in time—a very long time, no doubt—*determined as we are not to hasten persuasion by force nor to interfere in the settlement of Germany's internal affairs.*"

This policy, the only one that can give results, will find its justification in the future. To reduce Germany and Prussia, the Allies preferred practical means to an artificial disintegration of a conscious and accepted unity—a disintegration pregnant with present hatreds and future revenge. They forbade that union of Germany and Austria which the Socialists of both countries were preparing to carry out by sleight of hand and which a third only of the Reichsrath voted for in 1920. They took from her Poznan—the cradle of the junkers—which Bismarck described as the backbone of the Prussian body. They took from her the ore of Lorraine, which was the basis of her war industry—in all, 84,000 square kilometers, and 8,000,000 inhabitants. They deemed this solution more thoroughgoing than one which, violating their principles, would have given them the illusion of destroying German unity, while sacrificing to this illusion for the sole benefit of separate States, the whole or a part of our military and financial guarantees.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII

RECONSTRUCTION AND THE FUTURE OF FRANCE

GERMANY attacked France to dominate, mutilate, and ruin her. I have given above some details of the plan of methodical devastation devised by Germany in February, 1916.* Victory gave us back our frontiers and our security. But it left us impoverished to an extent unparalleled in history.

Our man power had suffered terribly. Of a population of 37,797,000—of which 9,420,000 were men between nineteen and fifty years—8,410,000, or eighty-nine and five-tenths per cent. of our potential effectives, had been called to the colours and for nearly five years withdrawn from productive labour. Of these 8,410,000 men called to the colours, 5,564,000, or sixty-six per cent. met either death or injury; 1,364,000 killed; 740,000 mutilated; 3,000,000 wounded; 490,000 prisoners. Nearly all of the latter returned from Germany ill and wasted, one man in ten tubercular for life. Compared to the total number of men called to the colours (8,410,000), the killed (1,364,000) represent sixteen per cent.; fifty-seven per cent. of all Frenchmen called to the colours between the ages of eighteen and thirty-two—the young generation which is the chief strength of a country—were killed. In order to grasp the full significance of these figures, apply them to the population of the United States. Had American losses been on the French scale, it would have meant the raising by America of about twenty-six and a half million soldiers, of whom four millions would have died.

This decline in man power went hand in hand with a decline in financial power. The net cost of the war—

* See Chapter IX, page 281.

Digitized by Google

deducting all that Germany has to reimburse (pensions and allowances) and all that France would have spent had there been no war—amounts to 150,000 millions. The grand total is 210,000 millions paid out of our Treasury from 1914 to 1919. For example our artillery and aviation cost us 46,000 millions; the equipment of our troops, 30,000 millions; separation allowances, 19,000 millions; food supplies for the Armies, 18,000 millions; pay, 12,000 millions; ocean freight, 12,000 millions; loans to our Allies, 11,000 millions. As the taxes during the war brought in only 34,000 millions, it is evident that 176,000 millions had to be found by other means for meeting the cost of the struggle. Deducting the 33,000 millions lent us by our Allies, this leaves a sum of 143,000 millions paid by France from her own resources, plus 34,000 millions in taxes, a total of 177,000 millions in all. The national debt which, in 1914, amounted to 35,000 millions with no foreign debt, has risen to 176,000 internal debt, and 33,000 millions foreign debt, (68,000 millions at the October, 1920, rate of exchange.) The budget has risen from about 5,000 millions in 1914 to 22,000 millions.

But this new burden coincides with an enormous decrease in our capital. Lord Derby, Ambassador of Great Britain in Paris, addressing a meeting of his countrymen in Liverpool, in 1919, said: "Suppose England were deprived of Lancashire by an earthquake; then you will understand what the ruins of war and German destruction mean to France." A few figures to illustrate this comparison which though striking, is probably an understatement:

Inhabitants driven from their homes	2,732,000	
Lands destroyed by battle	3,800,000	Hect.
Villages devastated	4,022	
Houses completely or partly destroyed	594,616	
Schools destroyed	6,454	
Factories destroyed (completely or partly)	20,539	
Live stock carried off	1,360,000	head
Railway lines of general and local interest destroyed	4,789	km.
Roads destroyed	53,398	km.

Digitized by Google

Canals destroyed	948 km.
Public works destroyed on roads and railroads	5,041

Pre-war production of the devastated zone with regard to the total production of France.

Coal	55%
Woolen goods	94%
Linen thread	90%
Ore	90%
Pig iron	80%
Sugar	70%
Cotton goods	60%
Electric power	45%
Sugar beets	25%
Oats	10%
Wheat	9%
Fodder beets	9%
Percentage of taxes paid in 1913 by the devastated zone	18.5%

The classification by departments of these total losses emphasizes the immensity of the disaster. It is given in the following tables:

DEPARTMENT OF THE NORD

Population of the war zone in 1914		1,862,000
Population driven out by the war		758,000
Villages devastated		501
Schools destroyed		1,555
Houses completely destroyed		50,010
Houses partly destroyed		101,292
Total surface ruined	H^a	500,000
Arable lands ruined	H^a	268,808
Live stock carried off		244,000
Factories destroyed completely or partly		11,814
Roads destroyed	K^m	7,578
Public works destroyed on roads		1,032
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	K^m	540

DEPARTMENT OF THE PAS-DE-CALAIS

Population of the war zone in 1914	581,000
Population driven out by the war	460,000
Villages devastated	367
Schools destroyed	554

Digitized by Google

Houses completely destroyed		70,634
Houses partly destroyed		36,480
Total surface ruined	Ha	267,000
Arable lands ruined	Ha	138,082
Live stock carried off		124,000
Factories destroyed completely or partly		1,560
Roads destroyed	Km	7,840
Public works destroyed on roads		133
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	Km	147

DEPARTMENT OF THE SOMME

Population of the war zone in 1914		281,000
Population driven out by the war		280,000
Villages destroyed		448
Schools destroyed		596
Houses completely destroyed		40,335
Houses partly destroyed		18,766
Total surface ruined	Ha	400,000
Arable lands ruined	Ha	190,700
Live stock carried off		140,000
Factories destroyed completely or partly		1,099
Roads destroyed	Km	7,144
Public works destroyed on roads		173
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	Km	220

DEPARTMENT OF THE OISE

Population in the war zone in 1914		112,398
Population driven out by the war		96,000
Villages destroyed		263
Schools destroyed		260
Houses completely destroyed		8,745
Houses partly destroyed		15,650
Total surface ruined	Ha	170,000
Arable lands ruined	Ha	107,332
Live stock carried off		78,000
Factories destroyed completely or partly		283
Roads destroyed	Km	2,688
Public works destroyed on roads		152
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	Km	61

DEPARTMENT OF THE AISNE

Population in the war zone in 1914		530,000
Population driven out by the war		290,000
Villages destroyed		814

Digitized by Google

Schools destroyed		1,224
Houses completely destroyed		55,268
Houses partly destroyed		50,018
Total surface ruined	Ha	730,000
Arable lands ruined	Ha	432,000
Live stock carried off		251,000
Factories destroyed completely or partly		1,966
Roads destroyed	Km	6,391
Public works destroyed on roads		761
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	Km	609

DEPARTMENT OF THE MARNE

Population in the war zone in 1914		300,000
Population driven out by the war		223,000
Villages destroyed		320
Schools destroyed		432
Houses completely destroyed		30,612
Houses partly destroyed		19,285
Total surface ruined	Ha	293,000
Arable lands ruined	Ha	136,639
Live stock carried off		116,000
Factories destroyed completely or partly		913
Roads destroyed	Km	6,183
Public works destroyed on roads		132
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	Km	204

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARDENNES

Population in the war zone in 1914		324,000
Population driven out by the war		180,000
Villages destroyed		443
Schools destroyed		789
Houses completely destroyed		10,440
Houses partly destroyed		14,205
Total surface ruined	Ha	525,000
Arable lands ruined	Ha	125,000
Live stock carried off		185,000
Factories destroyed completely or partly		1,528
Roads destroyed	Km	3,621
Public works destroyed on roads		600
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	Km	344

DEPARTMENT OF THE MEUSE

Population in the war zone in 1914		180,000
Population driven out by the war		135,000

Digitized by Google

Villages devastated		398
Schools destroyed		520
Houses completely destroyed		24,229
Houses partly destroyed		12,457
Total surface ruined	Ha	320,000
Arable lands ruined	Ha	168,816
Live stock carried off		93,000
Factories destroyed (Meuse, Meurthe-et-Moselle and Vosges) completely or partly		1,376
Roads destroyed	Km	4,878
Public works destroyed on roads		94
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	Km	129

DEPARTMENT OF THE MEURTHE-ET-MOSELLE

Population in the war zone in 1914		424,000
Population driven out by the war		292,000
Villages devastated		363
Schools destroyed		395
Houses completely destroyed		11,796
Houses partly destroyed		16,609
Total surface ruined	Ha	475,000
Arable lands ruined	Ha	185,700
Live stock carried off		90,000
Factories destroyed completely or partly (total for for Meuse, Meurthe-et-Moselle and Vosges)		1,376
Roads destroyed	Km	4,630
Public works destroyed on roads		55
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	Km	111

DEPARTMENT OF THE VOSGES

Population in the war zone in 1914		82,000
Population driven out by the war		18,000
Villages devastated		105
Schools destroyed		129
Houses completely destroyed		2,122
Houses partly destroyed		5,663
Total surface ruined	Ha	120,000
Arable lands ruined	Ha	4,500
Live stock carried off		39,000
Factories destroyed completely or partly (total for Meuse, Meurthe-et-Moselle and Vosges)		1,376
Roads destroyed	Km	2,445
Public works destroyed on roads		36
Railway lines of local interest destroyed	Km	20

Digitized by Google

	Nord	*P. de C.*	*Somme*	*Oise*	*Aisne*	*Marne*	*Ardennes*	*Meuse*	*M.&M.*	*Vosges*	*Total*
Population in the war zone in 1914...	1862,000	581,000	281,000	112,398	530,000	300,000	324,000	180,000	424,000	82,000	4676,398
Population driven out by the war...	758,000	460,000	280,000	96,000	290,000	223,000	180,000	135,000	292,000	18,000	2732,000
Villages devastated.....	501	367	448	263	814	320	443	398	363	105	4,022
Schools destroyed.....	1,555	554	596	260	1,224	432	789	520	395	129	6,454
Houses completely destroyed.....	50,010	70,634	40,335	8,745	55,268	30,612	10,440	24,229	11,796	2,122	304,191
Houses partly destroyed.....	101,292	36,480	18,766	15,650	50,018	19,285	14,205	12,457	16,609	5,663	290,425
Total surface destroyed.....	Ha 500,000	Ha 267,000	Ha 400,000	Ha 170,000	Ha 730,000	Ha 293,000	Ha 525,000	Ha 320,000	Ha 475,000	Ha 120,000	Ha 3800,000
Arable lands ruined.....	Ha 268,808	Ha 138,082	Ha 190,700	Ha 107,332	Ha 432,000	Ha 136,639	Ha 125,000	Ha 168,816	Ha 185,700	Ha 4,500	Ha 1757,577
Live stock carried off.....	244,000	124,000	140,000	78,000	251,000	116,000	185,000	93,000	90,000	39,000	1360,000
Factories destroyed, comp. or partly..	11,814	1,560	1,099	283	1,966	913	1,528	.....	*1,376	.....	20,539
Roads destroyed.....	Km 7,578	Km 7,840	Km 7,144	Km 2,688	Km 6,391	Km 6,183	Km 3,621	Km 4,878	Km 4,630	Km 2,445	Km 53,398
Works on roads destroyed.....	1,032	133	173	152	761	132	600	94	55	36	3,168
Rail. lines of local interest destroyed.	540 km	147 km	220 km	61 km	609 km	204 km	344 km	129 km	111 km	20 km	2,385 km

Railway lines of general interest destroyed.....2,404 km
Works on railroads of general and local interest destroyed.....1,873
Canals destroyed .....948 km

*Meuse, Meurthe-et-Moselle and Vosges form only one district.

Digitized by Google

A large part of this destruction, carried out in cold blood behind the battle lines, was so thorough as to render reconstruction a matter of the utmost difficulty. Take the Lens coal mines with their sixteen mining centres; their twenty-nine pits; their 16,000 workmen; their output of four million tons in 1913. As early as September, 1914, the Germans destroyed all the pits and mining apparatus, cut the cables, dumped the cages and cars into the pits, and systematically broke up all the machinery. In 1915 explosives are employed. Props, cylinders, boilers, even their linings are blown up by dynamite and the galleries are flooded. Water fills the mines to the surface level. Before any work of restoration can be begun, it will be necessary to pump out fifty million cubic meters of water. Take the Arbel plants at Douai, covering 5,600 square meters. In a report dated January 31, 1915, the German Schroter boasts of having destroyed or stolen everything they contained. There was a huge steam hammer weighing 1,200 tons, the only one of its kind in the world. While the Germans were removing it, they taunted the French manager who had stuck to his post:

"It was with that press you got a Roumanian order for one hundred petroleum trucks away from us," they said. "We are going to carry it off to our own factories and we'll make the Arbel trucks ourselves now."

For three months a German engineer ransacked the archives, documents and correspondence of the company to complete the theft of the machinery by that of the clientele. Take the Homecourt iron and steel works. All the plates, all the sheet iron, rolling bridges, motors and machinery are removed. A special destruction staff with headquarters at Metz directed these operations under the name of "Administration for the Protection of French Factories." It would take a thousand pages to describe this vandalism in detail. Ruthlessly conducted, it achieved its purpose. No trace of industry left in these ten departments, the most prosperous in France. No trace of agricultural life either. Fruit trees cut down, barns blown up,

Digitized by Google

death everywhere. Take at random the Canton of Ribecourt in the Oise. Of its eighteen communes eight saw one hundred per cent. of their houses utterly wiped out. The proportion runs from eighty to ninety-five per cent. in seven other communes and there are only three where it falls below eighty per cent. Of nine hundred communes in the Department of the Aisne, only nineteen are untouched by war. In many regions after the Armistice it was possible to drive thirty or forty miles without coming across a single house. It was so between Soissons and Saint-Quentin (sixty kilometers); between Armentières and Péronne (ninety-five kilometers); between Soissons and Laon (forty kilometers). "The results of war," hypocritically moans the beaten foe. No, this is not true, and take as a single instance the Pas-de-Calais, where only two districts were ruined by war but all the territory behind the lines occupied by the enemy suffered equally.

So much for the ruin directly due to Germany. Heavy as it is, it is not the only burden borne by France as a result of the war. All our economic means have suffered. Not one of our resources is whole. Our railways, which for nearly five years carried all the Armies of the Allies, were worn out by the strain and showed in 1920 a deficit of 2,400 millions. Our merchant marine, which amounted to three million tons before the war, lost a million tons by submarine warfare and they could not be replaced as all through the war our naval yards were busy producing artillery for all our Allies. Two-thirds of our investment in foreign countries, which represented 37,000 millions in 1914, became unproductive. Our exports, less by 1,500 millions in 1914 than our imports, show a deficit of 21,000 millions in 1919. The pound sterling in 1920 has maintained its up level at about fifty francs and the dollar at about fifteen. France, at the very moment when the great field of reconstruction opened before her, was in the situation of a wounded man who has lost so much blood that he can scarcely move his limbs and can scarcely raise himself.

France, convalescent France, summoned all the forces

Digitized by Google

of her will, and already results show what energy is hers. She is still indeed far from recovered and if she is to continue as during the two years which have followed the Armistice, without execution of Treaty by Germany, without efficacious aid from her Allies, I shudder to think of the number of years it will take her to recover. And yet without undue national pride, I have the right to say that France may justly be proud of what she has already done.

Reconstruction of the devastated regions began without delay and has been carried on with method. To understand the extraordinary problem it presented, one must have seen and have felt it on the ground itself. Not a shelter, not an ordinary means of communication, not even a soil that could be cultivated—everything upheaved, pounded, ruined, killed, by four and a half years of destruction. The pioneer who comes into a new land can set to work to plow and to sow. The grain will grow. On the battlefields it is first necessary to remove projectiles, uproot wires, fill in shell-holes, level the ground. Where was a start to be made? Men, women and children rushed back to their recovered villages. But of these villages not one stone was left standing on another. Where were people to be housed? Houses or no houses, they stayed. How were they to be fed? How were they to be given tools? They answered the call of the soil and as clearing up began they tried to cultivate. How were live stock and seed to be moved? Where were they to be put? The French peasant solved the problem instinctively, for he thought of the land before he thought of himself and though he lacked labour, horses, everything in fact—even a roof over his head—he reaped, even in 1919, a harvest from the battlefield. Meanwhile with the energetic cooperation of the Government, mines and factories were repaired and in less than eighteen months after the Armistice, the features of resurrected France begin to appear on the zone of death.

Here again constructive effort must, like the work of destruction, be studied region by region. The accompanying tables give the relative percentages of restoration to September 1, 1920.

Digitized by Google

DEPARTMENT OF THE NORD

Trenches filled up	M^3	11,300,000	= 94%
Barbed wire removed	M^3	9,000,000	= 90%
Land cleared	M^3	3,000,000	= 75%
Population of the devastated region (October, 1920)		1,843,265	= 98%
Municipalities functioning		457	= 81%
Schools open		1,539	= 86%
Houses repaired		79,000	= 52%
Temporary houses erected		11,000	
Houses definitely rebuilt		18,000	=11.8%
Total surface cleared of projectiles	H^a	492,000	= 98%
Total surface levelled	H^a	490,000	= 98%
Arable surface cultivated	H^a	242,000	= 90%
Live stock returned		127,828	= 52%
Factories reconstructed and in operation		2,190	= 18%
Factories under reconstruction and in partial operation		2,927	= 24%
Factories not yet operating		6,697	= 56%
Roads rebuilt	K^m	5,813	= 74%
Public works rebuilt on roads		818	= 78%
Railway lines of local interest reconstructed	K^m	159	= 29%

DEPARTMENT OF THE PAS-DE-CALAIS

Trenches filled in	M^3	58,147,800	= 79%
Wire removed	M^2	54,989,800	= 73%
Localities cleared	M^3	4,689,400	= 52%
Population of the devastated zone (October, 1920)		344,851	= 59%
Municipalities in action		170	= 81%
Schools in action		492	= 88%
Houses repaired		18,515	= 21%
Temporary houses erected		18,924	
Houses definitely rebuilt		2,000	= 1.8%
Total surface cleared of projectiles	H^a	249,000	= 93%
Total surface levelled	H^a	233,600	= 83%
Arable surface cultivated	H^a	56,868	= 41%
Live stock returned		41,321	= 34%
Factories reconstructed and in operation		324	= 20%

Digitized by Google

Factories under reconstruction and in partial operation	
Factories not yet operating	
Roads rebuilt	
Public works rebuilt on roads	
Railway lines of local interest reconstructed	

DEPARTMENT OF TH

Trenches filled in	
Wire removed	
Localities cleared	
Population of the devastated zone (October, 1920)	
Municipalities in action	
Schools in action	
Houses repaired	
Temporary houses erected	
Houses definitely rebuilt	
Total surface cleared of projectiles	
Total surface levelled	
Arable surface cultivated	
Live stock returned	
Factories reconstructed and in operatio	
Factories under construction and in partial operation	
Factories not yet operating	
Roads rebuilt	
Public works rebuilt on roads	
Railway lines of local interest recor structed	

DEPARTMENT OF T

Trenches filled in	
Wire removed	
Localities cleared	
Population of the devastated zone (Oct ber, 1920)	
Municipalities in action	
Schools in action	
Houses repaired	
Temporary houses erected	

Digitized by Google

Houses definitely rebuilt.....		798	= 3.2%
Total surface cleared of projectiles.....	Ha	124,150	= 73%
Total surface levelled.....	Ha	116,280	= 66%
Arable surface cultivated.....	Ha	80,468	= 74%
Live stock returned.....		56,466	= 72%
Factories reconstructed and in operation		88	= 31%
Factories under construction and in partial operation.....		137	= 49%
Factories not yet operating.....		58	= 20%
Roads rebuilt.....	Km	1,263	= 46%
Public works rebuilt on roads.....		26	= 17%
Railway lines of local interest reconstructed	Km	41	= 67%

DEPARTMENT OF THE AISNE

Trenches filled in.....	M²	23,300,000	= 64%
Wire removed.....	M²	26,200,000	= 65%
Localities cleared.....	M²	2,600,000	= 52%
Population of the devastated zone (October, 1920).....		290,000	= 54%
Municipalities in action.....		214	= 33%
Schools in action.....		1,107	= 90%
Houses repaired.....		40,620	= 53%
Temporary houses erected.....		12,582	
Houses definitely rebuilt.....		0	= 0%
Total surface cleared of projectiles.....	Ha	592,000	= 81%
Total surface levelled.....	Ha	555,000	= 76%
Arable surface cultivated.....	Ha	325,000	= 54%
Live stock returned.....		43,368	= 16%
Factories reconstructed and in operation		232	= 11%
Factories under construction and in partial operation.....		253	= 12%
Factories not yet operating.....		1,481	= 75%
Roads rebuilt.....	Km	4,978	= 77%
Public works rebuilt on roads.....		367	= 48%
Railway lines of local interest reconstructed	Km	68	= 11%

DEPARTMENT OF THE MARNE

Trenches filled in.....	M²	23,177,000	= 79%
Wire removed.....	M²	41,253,300	= 95%

Digitized by Google

Localities cleared	
Population of the devastated zone (October, 1920)	
Municipalities in action	
Schools in action	
Houses repaired	
Temporary houses erected	
Houses definitely rebuilt	
Total surface cleared of projectiles	
Total surface levelled	
Arable surface cultivated	
Live stock returned	
Factories reconstructed and in operation	
Factories under construction and in partial operation	
Factories not yet operating	
Roads rebuilt	
Public works rebuilt on roads	
Railway lines of local interest reconstructed	

DEPARTMENT OF THE .

Trenches filled in	
Wire removed	
Localities cleared	
Population of the devastated zone (October, 1920)	
Municipalities in action	
Schools in action	
Houses repaired	
Temporary houses erected	
Houses definitely rebuilt	
Total surface cleared of projectiles	
Total surface levelled	
Arable surface cultivated	
Live stock returned	
Factories reconstructed and in operatio	
Factories under reconstruction and i partial operation	
Factories not yet operating	
Roads rebuilt	
Public works rebuilt on roads	

Digitized by Google

Railway lines of local interest reconstructed	K^m	30	= 8%

DEPARTMENT OF THE MEUSE

Trenches filled in	M^3	4,348,900	= 28%
Wire removed	M^2	23,645,700	= 84%
Localities cleared	M^3	1,897,700	= 94%
Population of the devastated zone (October, 1920)		98,000	= 54%
Municipalities in action		310	=100%
Schools in action		486	= 93%
Houses repaired		8,738	= 34%
Temporary houses erected		4,750	
Houses definitely rebuilt		1,112	= 3%
Total surface cleared of projectiles	H^a	264,800	= 82%
Total surface levelled	H^a	264,800	= 82%
Arable surface cultivated	H^a	69,200	= 40%
Live stock returned		29,710	= 31%
Factories reconstructed and in operation, composing one sector with Meurthe-et-Moselle and Vosges, giving total of		224	= 16%
Factories under construction and in partial operation		245	= 17%
Factories not yet operating		907	= 65%
Roads rebuilt	K^m	2,688	= 55%
Public works rebuilt on roads		70	= 74%
Railway lines of local interest reconstructed	K^m	43	= 34%

DEPARTMENT OF THE MEURTHE-ET-MOSELLE

Trenches filled in	M^3	10,643,300	= 95%
Wire removed	M^2	32,175,400	= 58%
Localities cleared	M^3	1,900,700	= 95%
Population of the devastated zone (October, 1920)		314,902	= 74%
Municipalities in action		132	= 43%
Schools in action		386	= 97%
Houses repaired		7,743	= 42%
Temporary houses erected		4,363	
Houses definitely rebuilt		3,995	= 14%

Digitized by Google

Total surface cleared of projectiles.....	Ha	400,50
Total surface levelled.....	Ha	400,50
Arable surface cultivated.....	Ha	135,75
Live stock returned.....		37,24
Factories reconstructed and in operation, forming only one district with Meuse and Vosges, giving a total of.....		22
Factories under construction and in partial operation.....		24
Factories not yet operating.....		90
Roads rebuilt.....	Km	2,86
Public works rebuilt on roads.....		1
Railway lines of local interest reconstructed	Km	9

DEPARTMENT OF THE VOSGES

Trenches filled in.....	M³	1,612,10
Wire removed.....	M³	4,379,90
Localities cleared.....	M³	372,00
Population of the devastated zone (October, 1920).....		68,90
Municipalities in action.....		7
Schools in action.....		12
Houses repaired.....		3,14
Temporary houses erected.....		22
Houses definitely rebuilt.....		1,3
Total surface cleared of projectiles.....	Ha	85,4
Total surface levelled.....	Ha	70,2
Arable surface cultivated.....	Ha	3,3
Live stock returned.....		4,3
Factories reconstructed and in operation, forming only one district with Meurthe-et-Moselle and Meuse giving a total of.....		2
Factories under reconstruction and in partial operation.....		2
Factories not yet operating.....		9
Roads rebuilt.....	Km	3
Public works rebuilt on roads.....		
Railway lines of local interest reconstructed	Km	

Digitized by Google

	Nord	Pas-De-Calais	Somme	Oise	Aisne	Marne	Ardennes	Meuse	Meurthe and Moselle	Vosges	Total Reparations for the Ten Depart's.	Total Destructions	Per cent. of Reparations
Trenches filled in.....	11,300,000 M³	58,147,800 M³	39,066,600 M³	13,558,300 M³	23,300,000 M³	23,177,000 M³	4,897,400 M³	4,348,900 M³	10,643,300 M³	1,612,100 M³	190,051,400 M³	277,000,000 M³	68%
Wire removed,.....	9,000,000 M³	54,989,800 M³	16,076,000 M³	14,601,600 M³	26,200,000 M³	41,253,300 M³	12,353,300 M³	23,645,700 M³	32,175,400 M³	4,379,900 M³	234,675,000 M³	310,000,000 M³	75%
Localities cleared.....	3,000,000 M³	4,689,400 M³	1,909,500 M³	1,081,300 M³	2,000,000 M³	1,458,600 M³	3,575,700 M³	1,897,700 M³	1,900,700 M³	372,000 M³	22,484,900 M³	42,100,000 M³	53%
Population of the devastated zone (October, 1920)....	1,843,265	844,851	120,294	88,917	290,000	232,000	204,104	98,000	314,902	68,901	3,605,234	4,676,398	77%
Municipalities in action....	457	170	381	201	314	551	503	310	132	73	2,992	3,544	84%
Schools in action.....	1,539	492	490	195	1,107	348	782	486	386	126	5,951	6,454	92%
Houses repaired.....	79,000	18,515	8,401	10,025	40,620	16,256	29,132	8,738	7,743	3,149	221,679	504,610	49%
Temporary houses erected...	11,000	18,924	6,048	2,757	12,582	4,363	4,236	4,750	4,363	225	69,248		
Houses definitively rebuilt.	18,000	2,000	1,647	798	.....	825	3,016	1,112	3,995	1,321	32,714	304,191	10.7%
Total surface cleared of projectiles.....	492,000 Ha	249,000 Ha	365,900 Ha	124,150 Ha	592,000 Ha	246,740 Ha	480,720 Ha	264,800 Ha	400,500 Ha	85,440 Ha	3,301,250 Ha	3,800,000 Ha	87%
Total surface levelled.....	490,000 Ha	233,600 Ha	298,500 Ha	116,280 Ha	555,000 Ha	214,700 Ha	433,390 Ha	264,800 Ha	400,500 Ha	70,290 Ha	3,077,060 Ha	3,800,000 Ha	80%
Arable surface cultivated...	242,000 Ha	56,868 Ha	127,000 Ha	80,468 Ha	325,000 Ha	68,118 Ha	90,000 Ha	69,200 Ha	135,750 Ha	3,300 Ha	1,197,704 Ha	1,757,577 Ha	68%
Live stock returned.....	127,828	41,321	31,886	56,466	43,368	18,989	53,455	29,710	37,245	4,343	444,610	1,360,000	32%
Factories reconstructed and in operation.....	2,190	334	267	88	232	96	396	.....	334	.....	3,817	20,539	18%
Factories under construction and in partial operation..	2,927	256	501	137	253	420	798	.....	245	.....	5,536	20,539	26%
Factories not yet operating.	6,697	981	331	58	1,481	397	334	.....	907	.....	11,186	20,539	54%
Roads reconstructed.....	5,813 Km	2,411 Km	2,820 Km	1,263 Km	4,978 Km	3,041 Km	1,373 Km	2,688 Km	2,867 Km	367 Km	27,621 Km	53,598 Km	52%
Public works rebuilt on roads (bridges, etc.)....	819	30	10	36	367	25	332	70	17	36	1,731	3,168	54%
Railway lines of general interest reconstructed.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	2,393 Km	2,404 Km	99%
Railway lines of local interest reconstructed.....	159 Km	48 Km	78 Km	41 Km	68 Km	17 Km	30 Km	43 Km	32 Km	4 Km	580 Km	2,385 Km	24%
Public works reconstructed on railway lines.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	1,502	1,873	80%
Canals reconstructed.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	802 Km	948 Km	84%

Digitized by Google

This effort, improvised as our troops advanced, was carried on by the State with the aid of private assistance as soon as the ground was freed. The Government services were powerfully organized. On January 1, 1920, there were 195,000 on their payroll, including 15,000 technical employees and 180,000 labourers. Transportation by them within the devastated regions represents eleven million kilometric tons per month. The cost to October 1, 1920, amounting to about 20,500 millions, divided as follows:

Reparation in money and in kind for damages	11,715,000,000	frs.
Relief for refugees	1,015,000,000	"
Labour and transportation for State account	3,915,000,000	"
Restoration of railways, roads, canals, telegraphic lines, reorganization of public services	3,400,000,000	"
Cost of administration	375,000,000	"
	20,420,000,000	"

These 20,420 millions were supplied by the French Treasury alone. The German Press, which might show a more becoming reserve, has never ceased to denounce the bad organization of the reconstruction services, squandering of public funds—excess of officials, etc. For political reasons a certain number of French newspapers have echoed this criticism. It is therefore interesting to note that of the 20,420 millions spent up to October 1, 1920, by the French Government, salaries of officials have only amounted to 375 millions, or one and eight-tenths per cent. of the total. If, in work of this magnitude, delays, imperfections and even mistakes are inevitable, the fact remains that the results already attained are more than could have been expected.

The above tables call for no comment in this respect. I would add to them the following facts. Agriculture, which in money and in kind received 3,500,000,000 francs in cash, loans and advances, produced in 1919 five million hundredweights of cereals. In 1920, the cereal production of the devastated regions was 11,500,000 hundredweights, against

Digitized by Google

20,500,000 in 1913, or fifty-six per cent. of the pre-war crop. The 1920 crop was sufficient to assure the bread supply for the entire population of the ten devastated departments. We are justified in the expectation that with few exceptions the whole of the battlefields will be under cultivation in 1921.

There were in 1914, in the regions affected by the war, 20,539 industrial plants of all kinds. The Ministry for the Liberated Regions made a thorough inquiry into 4,190 of these establishments selected from those employing in 1914 more than twenty workmen. This investigation gave very interesting results, the meaning of which should be made clear. The figures given below and the percentages relating thereto do not refer to the total number of factories ruined by the war, but only to one-fifth of them (4,190 out of 20,539.) In other words, they are of value as a partial indication—not as a complete result. They express proportions which—while absolutely correct for the 4,190 establishments visited—may well be correct for the other 16,000, but which nevertheless as regards the latter may differ widely. Subject to this reservation which I ask the reader to bear in mind, here are the results of the investigation:

Out of these 4,190 establishments, which employed over twenty people in 1914, 3,210 or seventy-six and six-tenths per cent. have resumed operations either entirely or in part as follows:

July 1, 1919	706
October 1, 1919	1,278
January 1, 1920	1,806
April 1, 1920	2,412
July 1, 1920	3,004
August 1, 1920	3,106
September 1, 1920	3,210

These 4,190 establishments employed 768,678 workmen in 1914; on September 1, 1920, they employed 366,930, or forty-seven and seven-tenths per cent.

The comparative percentages of reoperation and reem-

Digitized by Google

ployment in the ten departments based upo
plants is shown by the following table:

Percentage Applying to the 4,190 Factories Inv

Departments	*Reopening*	*Return*
Nord	81.7	
Pas-de-Calais	73.7	
Somme	58.9	
Oise	88.1	
Aisne	60.7	
Marne	72.5	
Ardennes	83.4	
Meuse	67.6	
Meurthe-et-Moselle	82.06	
Vosges	74.2	
Average	74.2	

If we apply this same method of analysis t
departments of industry, the following percent
established:

Percentage Applying to the 4,190 Factories Inves

Industries	*Reopening*	*Returne*
Mines and ore	76.4	
Quarries	82.6	
Food supplies	59.04	
Chemical industries	75.9	
India rubber paper	73.3	
Wool	83.3	
Textiles	69.1	
Materials	86.2	
Feathers and horsehair	100.	
Leather and skins	83.3	
Wood	83.9	
Metal manufactures	72.5	
Ordinary metals	86.7	
Precious metals	100.	
Cut stone for building	73.9	
Earthworks and constructions	92.5	
Brickyards	80.4	
Average	81.1	

Digitized by Google

The share of certain regions in these statistics deserves special mention. Thus in the district of Lille, which heads the list, the percentage of reoperation of factories investigated is eighty-six and two-tenths per cent., of the reemployment sixty-two per cent. If in this district a special table be drawn up for the textile industry, an exceptionally favourable percentage of reoperation calculated on the same basis will be found.

Personnel employed in the textile industry of Lille in the plants under investigation:

Woolen industry	93.8%
Cotton industry	78.8%
Dyeing and preparation	65.1%

At Tourcoing, fifty-five factories out of fifty-seven are in operation; at Roubaix, forty-six out of forty-eight. At Tourcoing, ninety-one and nine-tenths per cent. of the workers have been reemployed; at Roubaix ninety-nine and nine-tenths per cent. In the metal industries results are not so good owing to coal shortage. The percentage of reoperation for investigated factories is seventy-two and five-tenths per cent.; of reemployment only thirty-five and six-tenths per cent.

These results must be made known to our friends. It is the only answer we care to make to those who accuse France of sleeping on her victory. But it is essential that the enormous amount that still remains to be done should also be made quite clear. The approximate total cost of reconstruction of damages is 143,000 millions,* of which the *chief items* are the following:

Real estate	72,738 millions
Agriculture	16,419 millions
Industry	34,000 millions

The French Government alone has already spent 20,500 millions. The difference of 120,000 millions in round fig-

*Plus the pensions, *i. e.* 58 billions.

Digitized by Google

ures, indicates what remains to be done as opposed to what has already been accomplished. If Germany were not compelled by France and her Allies—all her Allies—to pay what the Treaty of Versailles demands of her, this would beyond a doubt mean our country's living for half a century under the weight of an intolerable burden.

The population of the devastated region in October, 1920, was seventy-seven per cent. of the 1914 population. France has, by her own efforts, placed under cultivation sixty-eight per cent. of the arable lands in these regions. She has rebuilt all her most important railways and fifty-two per cent. of her roads. But she has only been able to restore to the farmers thirty-two per cent. of the live stock stolen by Germany. She has only been able to reoperate in factories to the extent of eighteen per cent in full, twenty-six per cent. in part; this leaves fifty-four per cent. of her factories not yet in operation. Furthermore she has been able to replace destroyed houses by temporary constructions and repairs only to the extent of forty-nine per cent. Complete reconstruction of buildings has only been effected to an extent of ten and seven-tenths per cent. And this very low percentage expresses in striking fashion the limitations imposed by lack of money!

Living conditions in houses hastily rebuilt and in temporary barracks are appalling in some districts. Recultivation—in the absence of that slow and age-old upgrowth which had carried its yield to the maximum—meets with countless difficulties and the crops suffer. Industries—except in the important northern centers—have only had very limited means with which to start again; and their productive capacity will for months to come represent only a very small portion of pre-war output. I would add that in many communes the moral situation is affected by the material conditions. Health has an influence upon character. The promiscuity of improvised living conditions has a bad effect on children, which further aggravates the consequences of invasion and enemy occupation. Whatever one may try to do to better it, this environment is favour-

Digitized by Google

able to physical and mental deviations. If this state of things were to continue, it would be in every way dangerous. Yet it will last until Germany pays what she owes. Then and only then will France cease to bear alone the burden of reparation for German crimes.

Let me sum up. The France of the devastated regions and the other France behind the lines have put forward—alone and unaided—an immense effort of reconstruction. Farmers have tilled their fields and work has been started again without waiting to build a roof over their heads. All honour to them! But such a condition cannot last.

II

To restore the ruins was our first duty, it was not our only one. I have shown that the war had worn out the national tools of France. These have to be replaced. Reconstruction costs thousands of millions. To make it successful—possible even—all the resources of the country necessary to it—finances, transport, commerce—must be renovated and revived. Our means are reduced, our burdens are heavy; yet national reorganization cannot wait.

France has courageously begun financial reorganization. I insist upon this because of the criticism so often heard in America and elsewhere: "You have military courage, but you lack fiscal courage. You gave your all on the battlefield, but you are unwilling to submit to taxation." That this criticism is justified for the first two years of the war I admit, yet invasion represented for France a burden equal or greater to the excess taxes that other uninvaded countries imposed upon themselves. And it was believed that the war would be brief. How many errors military as well as financial resulted from this fundamental illusion. At least it must be acknowledged that France was not slow to readjust herself. During the last year of peace, she had paid less than 5,000 million francs in taxes. In 1919 she paid more than 9,000 millions. In 1920 thanks to new taxes introduced by the Clemenceau Cabi-

Digitized by Google

net and voted under the Millerand Cabinet, she paid 22,000 millions. This enormous increase is quite unprecedented. Remember the conditions under which it has been achieved and you will better understand what it means. The France of 1914, which paid less than 5,000 millions in taxes, had all her resources untouched of which the ten departments now devastated represented nearly one-fifth. The France of 1920, which paid 22,000 millions, cannot count upon revenues from the war zone. This means that the seventy-six untouched departments with their capacity very considerably limited by shortages of fuel, labour and transportation and by the unfavourable exchange, will have to bear the whole burden, paying in 1920 five times more than in 1914.

France faced the situation boldly and made the effort that was needed to place her finances on a sound basis. Her budget is balanced, permanent expenditures being henceforth covered by equally permanent revenues. The rest of our expenditures for 1920 are exceptional, partly on account of war liquidation properly met by loans, partly on account of reparations which in equity and by law of victory are justly chargeable to Germany. It is scandalously unfair that these last should still burden France.

France's debt on October 1, 1920, consists of:

Consolidated debt (nominal value)	113,250	millions
Floating debt	82,500	"
Foreign debt (normal rate of exchange)	34,125	"
	229,875	millions

If Germany in defiance of justice and right does not fulfil the conditions of the Treaty and pay what she owes, France, in order to continue reconstruction in the devastated regions and to pay the pensions in full, would be obliged to borrow about 170,000 millions the interest on which would represent 9,500 millions or an increase in taxation of 250 francs per head of her population over and above the 416 francs now levied by the National Govern-

Digitized by Google

ment which of course does not include the taxes raised by the departments and communes. These figures should be borne in mind by our Allies. They throw light on how Frenchmen (no matter what their party) feel when they say that the Treaty of Versailles must be enforced to the full.

On its enforcement our industrial revival largely depends, for we lack coal and under the Treaty it is Germany who must deliver it. Here again it is the attacked and victorious country that suffers while the beaten aggressor goes free. In 1920 Germany had sixty-five per cent. of her blast furnaces working. France had forty per cent. of hers. Yet Germany planned and carried out the destruction of the mines which supplied us annually with 22 million tons of coal—a quarter of the total French production. Germany under the Treaty was to deliver to France during the seven years following its coming into force 2,200,000 tons per month, something less than one-tenth of her 1913 output. At Spa in July, 1920, she obtained the reduction of this monthly figure to 1,500,000 tons. This obliges France—even if the 1,500,000 tons be delivered regularly—to import 30,000,000 tons a year. It is only with great difficulty—and at what a price—that England supplies us with 10,000,000 tons. So 20,000,000 tons must be procured elsewhere. The rigorous enforcement of the Treaty would lessen these forced imports by 8,400,000 tons. The security of French industry really depends upon such enforcement. If it is not insisted upon, our factories will continue to run on half time; our output will remain low; our exports will not increase; our exchange will keep on falling.

If the Treaty is not enforced as justice demands that it be, dark years await us. But if it is enforced, we can confidently look forward to the brightest future. France has in her soil prodigious potentialities of wealth. Properly cultivated with the means supplied by victory it could not only feed her people, but furnish exports also. Our crops fell off during the war. Already they are increasing again and we have the wherewithal to grow them greater

Digitized by Google

than ever. Since we have ceased to manufacture artillery, we can devote to agriculture the nitrogenized fertilizer it has lacked since 1914. Besides we now have the potash of Alsace. Equal in tonnage to the German deposits there is enough potash in Alsace to supply the whole world. It will permit France before long to increase her crops from the eighty million cwts. of pre-war days to 125 million cwts. and to sell abroad the wheat she is buying from foreign nations. Our colonies too will share in this prosperity. Morocco alone sent us 100,000 cwts. of corn in 1915 and 235,000 the following year. All Northern Africa is one vast grain field. If here as at home fundamental improvements and scientific methods are introduced, then France, seller of corn, will build up economic independence upon the soundest of bases.

This independence in industrial activity has a further certain guarantee in the very clauses of the peace. Alsace-Lorraine doubles our potential production in ore and pig iron. One of the reasons of German aggression was the greed of the manufacturers across the Rhine who lusted for the iron ore of our Briey Basin. Victory leaves us Briey and gives us back the basin of Lorraine which is its complement. So we are masters of the situation. For twenty years our metallurgists have shown that they can face difficult conditions with both science and daring. Thanks to them, our production from 1903 to 1913 showed an increase of eighty-seven per cent. for pig iron; of 152 per cent. for steel ingots and 130 per cent. for steel plates. During the same period France came second in the world development of the steel industry with an advance of 152 per cent. against 154 per cent. in Belgium, 118 per cent. in Germany, 115 per cent. in the United States. To-day we rank second among the ore nations of the world. The most splendid results are certain on two conditions. The first I repeat is that Germany deliver the coal she owes us and, in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, we are freed from the pre-war extortion practised upon us by Westphalian coal dealers whose interests were the same as those of our Essen

Digitized by Google

competitors. The second is that by efficient organization we secure the foreign markets monopolized by Germany in the past. These conditions are both feasible.

Thus favoured by exceptional mineral wealth, French industry possesses other valuable industrial resources. I merely mention in passing bauxite and nickel and come at once to the most important of all our future assets—our water-power which at average flow represents eight million horse-power. By the end of 1921 we shall have developed twice our pre-war horse-power. By continuing this development and by utilizing all power of the Rhone and the Rhine; by electrifying our railways, we shall be able to save many millions of tons of coal every year and free ourselves from a heavy bondage. Such an economic policy calls for the whole-hearted cooperation of our great industries and associations of manufacturers, not only of those providing similar goods but of those making complementary articles as well. It calls for that centralization which Germany so splendidly achieved and which Helfferich called in 1913, "the systematic cooperation of the great masses." Everything permits the hope that equally efficient organization will in less than twenty years place us in the front ranks of the exporting countries.

Our friends across the seas must not forget that the unlimited resources of our colonial empire are also available to increase the wealth of our metropolis. Western and Northern Africa will furnish cereals, fruits, vegetables and meat in abundance. Tonkin possesses coal, zinc, lead, tin and antimony. Madagascar has graphite; New Caledonia nickel; Guiana, gold; East Africa, ore and copper. The equatorial forests of the Congo and the Cameroons harbour in their 140,000 square kilometers vast quantities of rare wood and essential oils. Indo-China can export rice, jute and hemp. Every year 100,000 acres of land are placed under new cultivation. Among French ports, Saigon ranks immediately after Bordeaux. In 1920 the foreign commerce of Indo-China attained 4,000 million francs. Doubtless just before the war our colonial com-

Digitized by Google

merce had not yet reached its full expansion. Our colonial produce amounted to only ten per cent. of our total imports; but the hard years of war have strengthened the virtue of initiative in the French business world. The moment reconstruction is finished and the enormous sums it now absorbs can be devoted to developing new enterprises, the colonial Empire of France will assume its rightful place among the producers of the world.

Our railways, not satisfied with re-establishing in less than a year the main trunk lines destroyed by war, have completed the repair of their locomotives and rolling stock. Our commercial fleet, very inadequate before the war as it amounted only to 5.20 per cent. of the world's shipping, is gradually developing. A bank has been created with State assistance to promote foreign trade. Exports in 1920 already show an appreciable advance over those in 1919. France—unless she is allowed to be crushed beneath the weight of the burden which the Peace Treaty justly imposed upon Germany—is able to take a prominent part in that intensive production which Mr. Herbert C. Hoover declared in 1919 must be "the first and fundamental effort of Europeans."

III

And yet another reason for faith in the future of France: the virtues of her race—virtues that showed in the war and are just as clear in peace.

I know full well that it is not always the best that strikes the eye! The stranger within our gates sees first the outward aspects of our politics. Here as elsewhere they too often lack elegance and grace. I know full well for instance the harm done to France by the French Parliament when, six days after the Treaty came into force, it drove from office the man without whom the war would have been lost. Mr. Lloyd George's words still ring in my ears: "It is Frenchmen now who are burning Joan of Arc." I still have before my eyes the scathing comment of the American Press. On January 17, the *New York*

Digitized by Google

Times said: "The representatives of the French people have made a mistake that will do them more harm than it will M. Clemenceau;" and the *New York Herald*: "Because he thought only of *the good* of the State, M. Clemenceau incurred political hatreds to which he succumbs." The *New York Post*: "In his unexpected defeat M. Clemenceau remains the greatest figure of the war." The *New York World*: "The old Tiger is struck down at the very moment when France would have added to her own glory by calling him to the Presidency. The defeat of Clemenceau does not honour France." The *Philadelphia Public Ledger*: "All the reasons given will not excuse the French Parliament for having acted with the blackest ingratitude." After the Eastern Press let us glance at the most influential local papers. The *Springfield Republican*: "Americans are astonished." The *Charleston Gazette*: "Clemenceau did not need to be president to remain immortal." *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*: "America refuses to admit that the sentiments which animated the Congress of Versailles can faithfully reflect the opinion of the French people. Clemenceau's defeat is a blot on French history." The *Des Moines Capital*: "The defeat of the old Tiger has filled most Americans with amazement." The *Columbus Despatch*: "The Tiger's downfall has done away with some of the esteem felt for France." Fair enough applied to the few hundred men who in both Chambers gave so sad a display of ingratitude and inability, but not fair to the country as a whole which sees things as they are. The parliamentary system, essential safeguard of our liberties, has its weaknesses, not the least of which is the premium it places upon mere words. Our political world counts more spell-binders than statesmen. Some of these orators gave the full measure of their inability during the first three years of the war. To save the situation it was necessary to scrap them and to seek a man of another generation, a man of another kind, of another temperament and character, a man who in less than a year succeeded in squelching treason at home, in

Digitized by Google

creating unity of command at the front and in bringing victory to our banners. This work done and well done, the angry jealousy of those the Great Old Man had cast aside, sounded the hour of revenge. This was the unsavoury and dishonourable work of a lobby. France has the right to expect her friends not to judge her by the manœuvres of a few politicians seeking the spoils of a victory they had not been able to win.

France is something very different. France is first and foremost the land of order and restraint. A few months ago in the early part of 1920, Americans arriving in France asked: "What about Bolshevism?" Fifteen days spent in travel along French roads was enough to convince them. On their return they no longer asked the question and one of them, Judge Gary, president of the United States Steel Corporation, coined a phrase that will endure: "France leads the world because she leads in order." France is what she is for many reasons, the first being the material and moral health of her peasant class. In Russia the only hold the Soviets had on the peasants was the promise of land. Land! The French peasant has owned it for more than a century. He owns it and he loves it. I might even say that he is of it. Nowhere is landed property more thoroughly divided or more equally distributed than in France. Nowhere has this division of property more happily contributed to the formation of national character. The French peasant was the vital factor of our victory. He forms fifty per cent. of our population. In 1916 he supplied over sixty-five per cent. of the fighting troops. I have seen him at work in the trenches for months when I led a company of chasseurs. His physical stamina is almost without limit; his moral stamina is equal to his physical endurance. These peasants, being of the soil, fought for their soil like lions,—might I say like patient lions? They gave their lives with simple faith for they had understood that the future of the race demanded this sacrifice. Peace won, finds them true to themselves, ready for any effort, hardy sons of toil.

Digitized by Google

These men, who proved so well their common faith and their common sacrifice, are extreme individualists, and this individualism is the very basis of our stability. I know that this is a trait of our French character which British and Americans often fail to understand and to appreciate. There is no doubt that it hampers somewhat the rapidity and extent of our economic development. But as a political and moral safety valve it is unequalled. If revolutionary madness was able to make headway in backward Russia, it is because individualism was totally lacking among the masses. A Russian village or a Russian factory was a flock. The flock followed without thinking. It may even have believed, poor docile herd, that in revolution it would find happiness. As in the old day, even more than in the old day, it moves beneath the knout. Between Plehve and Lenine there is not much to choose. To such an appeal the men of our French fields would never respond. They would remain unmoved for they have a deep sense of what individual effort has achieved through the centuries—for they know what long and patient labour has won for them. The French peasant is distrustful and hard to persuade, he has no faith in revolutionary rhetoric. His own experience guards him against the illusions by which the human cattle of Russia were deceived. He has faith in the conquests of brain and brawn, protected by laws safeguarding persons and property. There is where he looks for and sees possible progress—and not in communism—because ordered progress—material and moral—is taught him by the story of his own life, the story of his family, the story of his village. He knows that he eats meat oftener than his grandfather, and that he is better educated and wealthier than his father—better equipped against the surprises of nature and the snares of men. He knows too that much of these advantages has come to him as a result of the general progress of the nation. So he is patriotic and conservative by instinct and by reason. He willingly shed his blood in a war of *self-defense*. He would begin again to-morrow, if it were necessary, because

Digitized by Google

every fiber of his being is in constant communion with the voice of the soil, he hears the great call for common effort, he knows that the strength and prosperity of the nation are essential to the strong and prosperous individual he feels himself to be and is determined to remain.

The industrial worker is less protected than the peasant against certain poisons. The prisoner of his factory during working hours, badly lodged, exposed to the temptations of cities, he falls an easy prey in all countries to the poison of the body and of the mind. I believe, however, that no other country in Europe has a working class as wise and as intelligent as ours. At the beginning of the war, one of Germany's most cherished hopes was the revolt of our industrial proletariat. The facts gave answer. All workers were called to the colours. All responded to the call. Many fell at Charleroi and on the Marne. Later when they were needed for the manufacture of munitions they were called back to the factories. There they worked with a will and the figures I have given* tell how great the effort they put forth. Not a strike, not a disturbance, not the slightest response to all kinds of incitements some of which had their origin outside of France. Peace came and with it a general relaxing of energies, an outburst of desires prompted by the belief that an Armistice written on a sheet of paper could transform the lot of humanity. Soviet propaganda developed. With what results? On May 1, 1919, there was a small amount of rioting in the streets of Paris. Read the list of arrests and you will see that they are nearly all of foreigners brought from all over the world by the great upheaval of war, but whose abortive violence cannot be laid to the French nation. In 1920 there was a railway strike. Only a minority took part in it and after a few weeks the extremists who had called it were replaced at the head of the Federation by moderate unionists whose place they had taken on the eve of the movement. A little later in September, 1920, the Congress of the General Confederation of Labour, at

*See Chapter II, pages 31-35.

Digitized by Google

Orleans, supporting a policy of production and democratic reforms, scored a victory for French syndicalism over the champions of Muscovite Sovietism and the Third International.

For the French workman as well as the French peasant, though perhaps with less constancy and consciousness and less reflection, displays that wealth of sound sense and balance which is the soul of our national genius. "*Vive* Lenine" may be heard in a public meeting. Lenine will find few followers in our midst, for we are neither so miserable nor so credulous. An old farmer of my district once told of his optimism in these simple and lofty words: "Here we have faith, for both soil and men are sound." This is true of all of France. The stranger within our gates may be led astray, for he sees mostly the scum which some widely circulated papers (less interested in truth than in sensation) show him: for he listens to parliamentary debates which the absence of organized leadership too often lowers to the level of personal disputes. This is politics. This is not France. France is the child of thirteen who, when her father left for the Army, made and sold nearly half a ton of bread a day. France is the woman who drove the plough or who was blacksmith, carpenter or mason or who made shells as 664,000 of them did. France is the miners of the Pas-de-Calais working their mines under shell fire in the midst of battle, falling at their posts but in one year producing at Bruay alone four million tons. That was the France of war-time. And the France of peace is no other. Her qualities are the same now as they were then. To see the rest of France, you must have vision. France is wounded, but her wounds are healing. France is a land of boundless resources, material and moral; a land that loves its liberties, and respects the liberties of others; a land that has suffered, but is determined to live; a land that has faith in the future, because it has faith in its work.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII

HOW THE PEACE IS BEING ENFORCED

THE Treaty of Versailles came into force on January 10, 1920. Since then the Allied Governments have on several occasions declared their common determination to enforce it absolutely. I reproduce here the most important of these declarations:

1. *Ministerial Statement by Millerand's Cabinet (January 22, 1920).*
2. *Speech by Mr. Lloyd George (March 25, 1920):*

My right honourable friend, Mr. Asquith, stated that the time had come to revise the terms of peace. These terms need no revision whatever..... First of all, Germany must clearly prove that she intends to carry out the Treaty to the full limit of her resources.

3. *Resolution passed in the French Chamber of Deputies by 518 votes to seventy (March 27, 1920):*

The Chamber, approving the statements of the Government, and relying upon them to secure, in agreement with the Allied and Associated Powers, the strict enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles.....

4. *Declaration of the Allied Governments at San Remo (April 26, 1920):*

The Allied Governments have unanimously decided fully to maintain the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles.

5. *Speech by M. Millerand (April 28, 1920):*

The first condition for the Spa Conference is that any idea of revising the Treaty of Versailles should be formally excluded. It is not a matter of revising the Treaty, but of applying it.

6. *Notes sent from Boulogne by the Allied Governments to the German Government (June 22, 1920):*

The Allied Governments surely and simply confirm their former decisions. The military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles are fully maintained. They must be strictly carried out.

Digitized by Google

These very firm declarations have been persistently belied by subsequent events. The Treaty of Versailles contained clauses of two kinds. Some were enforceable forthwith and they were all enforced absolutely and without delay, thanks to the preliminary steps taken in 1919 by M. Clemenceau. Other clauses on the contrary by their very nature entailed a certain delay and their enforcement was to begin in January, 1920. The most important of these clauses dealt with surrender of war criminals, disarmament of Germany and reparations.

The first capitulation of the Allies which prepared and made way for others occurred on January 13, 1920. It was in connection with the delivery to the Allies of the war criminals guilty of offenses committed in violation of international law and of the rules of warfare. To this provision which gave to the Treaty of Versailles the character of a verdict against Germany for her crimes, no Government had attached greater importance than the British. It was Mr. Lloyd George who in 1918, in a series of impassioned addresses, had rallied his fellow-citizens to the cry of "Hang the Kaiser!" a fit reply to the German *"Gott strafe England!"* It was the representative of Great Britain, Sir Ernest Pollock, who, in the eleven meetings of the Commission on Responsibilities, from February 3 to March 29, 1919, had uncompromisingly maintained the full demand for the surrender of the war criminals which was opposed by the American delegates. It was the British Prime Minister who, at seven meetings of the Council of Four from April 1 to May 5, demanded and obtained the strengthening of the proposals submitted by the Commission. It was Mr. Philip Kerr, Secretary to Mr. Lloyd George, who on June 16, 1919, wrote the letter in reply to Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau's protests stating that the Allies maintained their decisions. These documents ought to be quoted. On May 29, 1919, Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau wrote as follows:

The German Government cannot agree to a German being

Digitized by Google

brought before a special foreign court of law.... Nor can the German Government give its assent to a request being sent to the Government of the Netherlands requesting the surrender of a German to a foreign Power, with a view to unwarranted proceedings being taken against him.... If there be grounds for satisfaction by the punishment of certain persons individually culpable, the injured State should not inflict such punishment itself. It can merely demand such punishment from the State responsible for the guilty party. Germany has never refused and declares herself entirely ready to take such steps as to ensure all violations of the law of nations being prosecuted with the utmost rigour.

On June 16, 1919, the Allied Governments replied as follows:

The Powers consider that it is inadmissible to entrust the trial of those directly responsible for offenses against humanity and international right to their accomplices in their crimes.....

On June 28, 1919, Messrs. Hermann Muller and Bell signed the Treaty which, in accordance with the text handed on the seventh of May to Count von Brockdorff, provided for the trial of the ex-Emperor and the other criminals by an international court of law. On February 13, 1920, the Allied Powers gave up their demand for the surrender of the Kaiser and authorized the Government of the Reich to bring the other criminals to trial before the Court of Leipzig—that is to say, to allow them to be tried by those who, on June 16, 1919, they had called "their accomplices in their crimes." Everybody knows that at the end of 1920 not a single one of these criminals had been tried. Germany with the assent of the Allies had torn up an essential clause of the Treaty. This was the reward of her resistance and an encouragement to renew it. On February 21, 1920, I wrote: "The same thing is going to be repeated either against the Military Control Commission or the Reparations Commission." This is precisely what happened.

March 10, 1920, marked a time limit of capital importance for disarmament. Not only on this date was the supply of munitions to be limited to 1,500 and 500 rounds per

Digitized by Google

gun, according to caliber, in the few strongholds still retained; the disarmament of all fortresses in the demilitarized zone east of the Rhine; the suppression of military schools. But also and above all, March 10 was the date on which, under Article 169, Germany was to have delivered up to the Allies for destruction all arms, munitions and material of war in excess of the quantities authorized, besides all machinery and tools used in their production. On the same date she was to have given up all captures effected by her during the war. April 10 marked the expiration of a second time limit. On that date Germany under Article 163 was to have reduced the total of her effectives to 200,000 men. The meaning of this obligation was clearly defined in a note from the Supreme Council, dated December 1, 1919, signed by M. Clemenceau, in which Germany was called upon to suppress immediately on the coming into force of the Treaty all auxiliary corps (*Einwohnerwehren, Nothilfe, Sicherheitspolizei, etc.*) which Noske had for four months been perfidiously forming. The Allies intended that at the expiration of the time limit there should remain in Germany only 200,000 men in all, without camouflage. Even this figure under Article 160 was to be still further reduced three months later to 100,000.

History will ever be amazed at the fact that for four months nothing was done by the Allies either to demand the execution of these two measures or to enforce them when the time came. For four months the Council of the Allies met uninterruptedly at London. On two occasions all the heads of the Governments were present together. Not once, however, did these meetings result in a reminder to Germany either by word or deed that the Allies insisted upon her disarmament and would not permit her to elude it. Not once was she solemnly and publicly summoned to fulfill the undertakings to which she had subscribed. Things were allowed to drift. To be sure the Military Commission which M. Clemenceau had sent to Germany as far back as November, 1919, was still at Berlin. But it is clear that, alone and unsupported by those who sent it, the

Digitized by Google

Commission was inevitably powerless. It is clear that, forced to confine itself to technical discussions which the Prime Ministers never once raised to the level of politics, it was condemned in advance to be sterile. The Governments did not bring to bear the united pressure which they alone had power to exert.

When at the end of July, 1920, the Spa Conference met, the Allies were able to see the effects of their policy. German military legislation had not been changed. No law had been passed either to abolish conscription or comply with the obligation concerning reserves. Under guise of *Reichswehr* and other auxiliary formations, the Army still numbered nearly a million men, instead of 100,000. As to artillery, more than 15,000 guns remained to be delivered and destroyed. As to aviation, only 900 aeroplanes out of 10,000 had been delivered. Allied officers assaulted in several German cities in March had received neither apology nor satisfaction. Four months later, in November, 1920, some progress had been made with the destruction of artillery but the *Einwohnerwehren* and *Sicherheitspolitzei* were neither disarmed nor dissolved.

II

This also encouraged Germany in the great financial offensive she was preparing to launch. In eluding the disarmament clauses she was prompted mainly by sentiment; for she could not possibly hope that her shortcomings, no matter how numerous, could enable her to begin war anew. But on the contrary in regard to reparation, every breach of the Treaty, every month gained, every clause eluded, was a positive asset in the great economic struggle by which Germany, her means of production untouched, hoped to achieve future victory.* By non-payment, by non-delivery of raw materials, Germany was sharpening her economic sword. By urging acceptance of a lump-sum, that is to say the arbitrary reduction of her debt—she lightened

(1) See Chapter X, pages 320-321.

Digitized by Google

her liabilities and increased her assets. By concentrating her efforts against the Reparation Commission which was to force upon her a system that would enable her to pay, she was destroying the Allies' means of action. This plan was vast and obvious. At nearly every point Germany, in 1920, won the game.

Although by the nature of things time limits for Reparations were longer than for disarmament, certain things (and not the least important) were to have been done by Germany either immediately the Treaty came into force or within a time limit of three months, *i. e.*, before April 10, 1920. Here, as in the case of disarmament, it is clear that performance could be counted upon only if Germany were made to understand that she would not be permitted escape. In these all important matters the Allies displayed the same weakness as in the case of the war criminals and of disarmament. For months nothing was done or even attempted. Nothing by the Governments, nothing by the Reparations Commission. And yet the Powers in 1919 had made known their will in the most forceful and clearest possible manner. They had replied to the German counter proposals as follows:

> The proposals of the Allies confine the amount payable by Germany to what is clearly justifiable under the terms of the Armistice.....
>
> The Allied and Associated Powers, consistent with their policy already expressed, decline to enter into a discussion of the principles underlying the reparation clauses.
>
> The categories of damages and the clauses concerning reparation must be accepted by the German authorities as matters settled beyond all discussion.....
>
> The Allied and Associated Powers will not entertain arguments or appeals directed to any alteration.....
>
> Beyond this, the Allied and Associated Powers cannot be asked to go. The draft Treaty must be accepted as definitive and must be signed....

On June 28, 1919, Messrs. Hermann Muller and Bell signed the Treaty which, by Article 232, binds Germany

Digitized by Google

without limitation or reservation, either as to amounts or duration of the payments, to make full reparation for all damages to persons and property and to pay the total amount of pensions—that is to say, for France alone according to the estimates put forward in May, 1920, by M. Millerand, about 200,000 million francs. Despite this, on May 15, 1920, it was announced that the British and French Governments had agreed to consider a lump sum which made impossible the full payment of damages and pensions imposed upon Germany, both by the Armistice and by the Treaty of Peace itself. Again Count von Brockdorff-Rantzau had his revenge! At the end of 1920 the same vacillation in principle marked the Brussels Conference.

And what has been done on the other hand towards the future enforcement of the financial terms of peace? Here again the evidence is plain. To make this clear I reproduce the articles of the Treaty which the Reparation Commission is bound to apply to force Germany to pay.

Art. 236. Germany further agrees to the direct application of her economic resources to reparation.

Art. 248. A first charge upon all the assets and revenues of the German Empire and its constituent States shall be the cost of reparation, etc.

Para. B. Art. 12, Annex II. The sums for reparation which Germany is required to pay shall become a charge upon all her revenues prior to that for the service or discharge of any domestic loan.

Art. 260. The Reparation Commission may within one year from the coming into force of the present Treaty demand that the German Government become possessed of any rights and interests of the German nationals in any public utility undertaking or in any concession, operating in Roumania, China, Turkey, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria.

Art. 12. Paragraph B., Annex II. The German scheme of taxation shall be fully as heavy proportionately as that of any of the Powers represented on the Commission.

Annex II, Art. 12. The Commission shall have all the powers

Digitized by Google

conferred upon it, and shall exercise all the functions assigned to it by the present Treaty.

Art. 240. The German Government will supply to the Commission all the information which the Commission may require relative to the financial situation and operations, and to the property, productive capacity, and stocks and current production of raw materials and manufactured articles.

Art. 241. Germany undertakes to pass, issue and maintain in force any legislation, orders and decrees that may be necessary to give complete effect to these provisions.

Art. 18, Annex II. The measures which the Allied and Associated Powers shall have the right to take, in case of voluntary default by Germany, and which Germany agrees not to regard as acts of war, may include economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals and in general such other measures as the respective Governments may determine to be necessary in the circumstances.

What has the Reparation Commission done with all these means of action in eleven months? Nothing or almost nothing.

1. *Making up Germany's account.* This essential function of the Reparation Commission has not been fulfilled and despite reiterated demands of our Parliament the Reparation Commission has declared itself incapable of furnishing this account.

2. *Means of payment.* (a) *Coal.* I shall show below* that as a result of the Spa agreement coal has lost its value as a means of payment because for the 24,000,000 tons to be delivered a year the Allies have to disburse 4,170 millions in premiums and advances. (b) *Live stock.* The French Minister of the Liberated Regions informed the Senate on December 16, 1920, that for the deliveries under Paragraph 2 of Annex 4 to Chapter 8 of the Treaty he had forwarded his demands to the Reparations Commission in March, 1920. It was in December, 1920, that the Reparations Commission "laid down the conditions under which these deliveries would be made." This delay is all the more extraordinary in that the immediate deliveries under

*See pages 418-421.

Digitized by Google

Article 6 of Annex 4 had been regularly made. (c) *Tonnage.* The Finance Commission of the Chamber wrote in its report of June 14, 1920, "as far as we are aware the Reparations Commission has not yet notified the German Government of the amount of tonnage to be laid down in the first two years following the coming into force of the Treaty." (Paragraph 5 of Annex 3). (d) *German assets abroad.* These assets estimated at 12,000 millions at least are a valuable means of payment. The Finance Commission in its report quoted above wrote, "Germany's capacity to pay by means of assets abroad ought to be immediately investigated by the experts of the Reparations Commission."

3. *Supervision and modification of Germany's economic and financial systems.* This—as I have said and as I repeat—was the fundamental task of the Reparations Commission. To accomplish it, it was given the fullest powers as evidenced by the text I have quoted above. It was armed to force Germany in the words of Lord Cunliffe, Governor of the Bank of England and British Delegate to the Peace Conference, to "organize herself as an exporting nation for the payment of her reparation debts." It was the only way in which Germany could possibly pay a debt of more than 300,000 millions. To this end the Reparations Commission was given the right and entrusted with the duty of supervising Germany's budget, her revenues, her expenditures, her production, her exports, her imports; the right and the duty to institute all measures of a nature to assure payment. What has it done with this right, what has it done to fulfill this duty?

Statistics drawn up last summer by the League of Nations proved that the individual German is less burdened by taxation than the individual Englishman or Frenchman. German interior loans continue to draw interest—money that belongs to the Reparations Commission. The prior lien on all property and assets of the German States has never been foreclosed. No change has been insisted upon in the German legislation to give effect to this privilege. Germany has even been allowed to lend money to neutrals.

Digitized by Google

Quite recently M. Guy de Wendel, a member of the French Parliament, startled the Chamber by showing how the German Government by subsidizing its industries managed instead of paying its debts to compete with its creditors by dumping exports.

Not an initiative. Not even the least firmness, for firmness presupposes some effort—and no effort has been made. If things are thus: if the Reparations Commission which is composed of very distinguished men, which is provided with a numerous staff, liberally paid, and is supplied with enormous credits has displayed such impotence it is because, expecting the revision of the Treaty from day to day, it has had no heart to enforce it. Here again politics whose present results I have described prepares the same evil consequences for the future.

To these concessions by omission, further concessions by commission were added. The coal problem furnished the pretext, Spa the occasion. The quantities of coal to be delivered by Germany had been fixed by the Treaty at an average of 3,500,000 tons per month. The Reparations Commission taking Germany's difficulties into consideration had agreed to reduce this quantity to 2,400,000 tons. The Spa agreement still further reduced it to 2,000,000—about to what (within about 300,000 tons) had been proposed by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau on May 19, 1919. The reduction thus granted is forty-three per cent. of the amount written in the Treaty. At the same time to the stipulation that the coal delivered by Germany should be valued at German pit mouth prices the Spa agreement substituted a price increased by fixed premiums and variable advances —both equally unwarranted. The premium of five marks (gold) per ton (francs 13.75) was granted in exchange for an alleged right given the Allies' demand "coals of specific classified qualities." Now they were already entitled to this under Paragraph 10, Schedule 5, of Chapter 8 of the Treaty, giving the Reparations Commission power to decide all disputes concerning qualities. Under this paragraph the Allies had from the very beginning

Digitized by Google

paid the sliding scale applied to the various qualities of coal and did that according to the German interior price scale. Under the Spa agreement, they are to pay a yearly increase of (francs 13.75 x twenty-four millions tons) or 330 million francs, 266 millions of which is France's share. The advances granted were still more onerous and had more far-reaching effects. The Spa Conference decided that the Allies would grant Germany "advances the amount of which shall be equal to the difference between the German inland market price plus the premium of five marks (gold) and the export price F. O. B. German port, or F. O. B. English port, and in any case the lower of these two prices." The cost of the operation was as follows:

English export price	Frs.	240.
German pit mouth price	Frs.	70.
Premium fixed at Spa	Frs.	13.75
Total inland price after Spa Conference	Frs.	83.75
Difference between the two prices	Frs.	156.25

The advances therefore represented (francs 156.25x2,000,000 tons) or 312,500,000 francs a month. As under the Spa agreement, France was to furnish sixty-one per cent. of these advances she was obliged to appropriate 190,625,000 francs a month or about 2,287 million francs a year. In all taking France alone into consideration she found herself charged for the 1,600,000 tons she was to receive monthly with:

German inland market price ...	1,600,000 ×	70	=112,000,000
Premiums	1,600,000 ×	13.75	= 22,000,000
Advances .....61% of	2,000,000 ×	156.25	=190,625,000

So to obtain valuable consideration to the amount of 112,000,000 francs which under the Treaty of Versailles she was to receive without having any payment to make, France was thenceforward to pay 22,000,000 francs in premiums and 190,625,000 francs in advances every month.

This revision of the Treaty, onerous as are its immediate consequences, has an even more serious effect. In

Digitized by Google

the first place it runs counter to one of the essential principles of the Treaty of Peace, that reparations take precedence over German needs and that especially in the case of coal Germany is bound up to twenty million tons yearly to make good in absolute priority the French shortage caused by the systematic destruction of French mines in the North by the German Army. On the contrary the Spa agreement gave Germany, which in 1920 was satisfying her own coal needs to a greater extent than those of France (sixty-eight per cent. as against fifty-five per cent.), the right to special assistance to increase her industrial production. In other words, whereas the Treaty specified that deliveries to the Allies should be made before Germany's needs were attended to, the Spa Conference authorized Germany to serve herself first. In the second place coal has ceased to benefit the Reparation Fund as a means of payment; for either in the form of premiums or of advances, the Allies are obliged to make for every ton a cash disbursement exceeding the value of the coal received.

Finally the increase granted to Germany has resulted in the consolidation of British export prices. During the Paris Conference the French delegates had two main objects in view in regard to coal. The first was to put an end to the pre-war situation which permitted German industry controlling both coal and coal prices to blackmail French industry. That is why after long discussions they had obtained that the coal to be delivered by Germany under the Treaty should be reckoned at German inland prices. The second was to protect France against the rise in English export prices, which had just begun and has gone on increasing ever since. These guarantees were provided and agreed to after much opposition, but the Spa Convention reversed the situation. The premium of five marks (gold) per ton has handicapped French industry as compared with German industry to the extent of ninety per cent. The advances calculated on the English export price have strengthened the latter which is so high that Great Britain is able to supply her domestic consumers at less

Digitized by Google

than cost price. The Spa agreement not only deprived France of the right to pay for German coal at the same rate as German industry, it bereft her also of all means of reducing the price of English coal by competition.

So revision—unmistakable revision—revision demanded not only by Germany but by one of our Allies—a revision at first implicitly tolerated and afterwards explicitly accepted has been the policy of the Allies in 1920 notwithstanding official talk about enforcement. The only clauses of the Treaty which have been enforced are those which went into effect prior to its coming into force on January 10, 1920, or those whose application in every little detail had been prepared by the Supreme Council of the Allies in 1919 (Schleswig, Upper Silesia, etc.). For the rest, carelessness, party spirit and lack of unity have played into Germany's hands, encouraged Pan-Germanist forces and delayed the coming of the new order of which the Treaty of Versailles had laid the foundations.

III

To excuse this failure two arguments are in turn employed. At times it is said that the peace is impossible of execution; at times that it is an unjust peace. This doctrine has its Bible and its Priests—let us see what it is worth.

An impossible peace? It was enforced in 1919 in its essential clauses. The reduction of German territory by 84,000 square kilometers? Enforced. The return of Alsace and Lorraine to France free of all charges; the return to Poznan to Poland; the return of the Walloon cantons to Belgium? Enforced. Enforced also the rupture of governmental ties between the Sarre and Prussia: the plebiscite of Schleswig; the installation of the Plebiscite Commission in Upper Silesia.

Enforced also the occupation by Allied troops and the control by an Inter-allied High Commission presided over by a Frenchman of the left bank of the Rhine and the

Digitized by Google

bridgeheads; the dismantlement of the fortresses of the neutral zone; the surrender of the fleet.

Other clauses, it was true, could only by their very nature be enforced progressively and within a certain lapse of time. But what do we see? At the very time when Germany was declaring these clauses impossible of execution, she was nevertheless obliged to execute them despite the weakness of the Allies. Let us take the period of the financial application of the peace which opened on January 10, 1920, when it came into force and will end on May 1, 1921. What were during the period the essential obligations of Germany?

1. To return the money, securities, live stock and goods of all nature carried off, seized, or sequestrated which could be identified, this restitution not being credited to Germany in the reparations account. (Articles 238-239 and 243 of the Treaty.)

2. To pay to the Allies on account of reparations 20,000 million marks gold either in gold, in goods, in tonnage, in securities or otherwise. (Article 235 of the Treaty.)

What has become of these two obligations?

1. *Restitutions.* The amount of securities, moneys and valuable assets identified and recovered from Germany totalled 8,300 million francs on May 31, 1920, to which were to be added 500,000 tons of machinery and raw material. (Report of the Finance Commission of the French Chamber, June 14, 1920.)

2. *Reparations.* On July 20, 1920, before the same commission Mr. François Marsal, French Minister of Finance, questioned on the total amount of payments made by Germany on account of reparations, declared that he did not have the exact figure. He added, however, that in his opinion Germany had already paid about 10,000 millions. Since then the Finance Commission, despite reiterated demands, has been unable to obtain an accounting of German payments. The most competent of its members estimate the total at about 12,000 or 14,000 millions as of December 31, 1920.

Digitized by Google

letter, for up to June 30, 1920, Germany had already paid more than half of the 20,000 millions. That for to-morrow, that is to say for the payment to be made after May 1, 1921, none of the means of action which the Treaty provides has been either utilized or even prepared. During all the year 1920, the givers of advice have flocked to Government and newspaper offices, each bringing his own little "plan of reparations." The only plan that counts is in the Treaty of Versailles. Facts prove both that this plan is possible of execution and that little indeed is being done to execute it. But let us stick to it. It is a plan which, however spinelessly applied, has already made Germany give back 9,000 millions of loot to France alone and pay some 12,000 millions of reparations to the Allies as a whole. It is better than the other plan under which, by the Spa agreement, the Allies are obliged to pay Germany more than 4,000 millions a year.

So much for the first criticism that the peace is an impossible one. What shall we say of the second: that it is an unjust peace which violates all the principles of the Allies? Here again answer is easy. A peace imposed upon aggressor nations by nations attacked; a peace which places reparations to the account of the guilty, whose responsibility it proclaims; a peace which liberates Alsace and Lorraine, restores Belgium, brings Bohemia and Poland to life, and emancipates the oppressed populations of Transylvania, Croatia, Slovenia, the Trentino, Istria and Schleswig: a peace which conclusively proves that militarism does not pay,—such a peace is a sound peace, such a peace is a just peace.

However, let us not be deceived. These contentions whether put forward on political or on economic grounds are always pro-German arguments. "Capacity of payment," put forward to give the oppressor the benefits of his recovery; "economic solidarity," all the benefits of which go to the beaten foe; and "the reorganization of Europe" which makes European prosperity dependent upon German prosperity—these are the prize pro-German

Digitized by Google

arguments. A German argument, too, that relating to the uselessness of small states and the "law of concentration!" An argument we used to read over the signatures of von Bülow and Bernhardi, before meeting it again over Mr. Keynes' name in connection with Dantzig, Upper Silesia, the Germans of Bohemia or the Hungarians of Transylvania. An argument that is merely the German motto: "Woe to the weak!" Millions of Allied soldiers fell fighting against it. Should the makers of the peace become its converts after victory? Feigned indignation over alleged violations of principles will dupe those only who wish to be duped, it will not bear investigation. It is quite true that there are Germans in Dantzig, Upper Silesia and Bohemia, but who did not know beforehand that there would be? Who does not know that this is the necessary consequence of two centuries of German oppression and colonization? Who does not know of the mingling of races throughout Central Europe, due not only to long centuries of war, but also to the systematic policy of the Prussian Government?

And so there have been established by force and by ruse in Polish or Czech territory those German colonies which in time and by method have in certain places passed from minorities to majorities. What then was the position of the victorious Powers? They had promised in solemn declarations which in November, 1918, became the very bases of the Treaty of Peace to establish an independent Poland with access to the sea; an independent Bohemia within her historic frontiers. These promises had been approved by the Parliaments and by the peoples. They had to be kept and there was nothing to do but to leave a certain number of Germans or Magyars in Poland, Bohemia, Roumania and Jugo-Slavia. This had to be, for if the territories in which these Germans lived had been cut off from either Poland or Bohemia, neither of these nations could have formed a state. If Dantzig had remained German, Poland would have had no seaport. If the Germans of Bohemia had been separated from the

Digitized by Google

Czecho-Slovakian that state would have had no frontiers. So unless the most solemn promises were to be repudiated, German minorities had to be included within the boundaries of the emancipated countries. Were these minorities to be excluded? Then there would be no Poland and no Bohemia. The promise would have been broken and to whose detriment? To the detriment of those who forcibly deprived of their liberty had for centuries awaited the just redress of their wrongs. And who would have profited thereby? Those who for centuries had professed that might makes right.

So the principle was unassailable. Fault has, it is true, been found with its application, and it is said: "In all such cases there ought to have been a plebiscite." In many cases that is exactly what was done. In other cases it could not be done. Why? Because the plebiscite—while confirming what was already known without it—would not have altered the dilemma I have just defined. No plebiscite was required to prove the existence of German minorities either in Poland or in Bohemia. But with or without a plebiscite the same difficulty remained, *i. e.*,—the impossibility of recreating without these minorities a Bohemia or a Poland likely to last. With or without a plebiscite nations long-enthralled whose emancipation had been sworn would have been annihilated, and annihilated with refined hypocrisy by refusing them the means of existence just when they were being given a new life. This the Conference refused to do and it was right in so refusing. Nothing was left undone to limit an evil which could not be entirely avoided. First by careful inquiry the frontiers of the liberated nations were so defined as to comprise the smallest possible number of alien peoples. Then whenever the inclusion of districts peopled mostly by Germans was not vital, recourse was always had to a plebiscite. This was the case in Schleswig, Upper Silesia, Marienwerder and Allenstein, where as events have proved insufficient precautions were taken against German fraud. Finally, when ethnic minorities were placed under the sovereignty

Digitized by Google

of another race their rights were surrounded by guarantees so far-reaching that the interested Governments denounced them as a violation of their rights. Such the bases of the Treaty. What others could have been suggested without betraying the war aims of the Allies, without sacrificing the victims of centuries of German might to the Germans themselves, without strengthening the bondage of these victims to their tyrants?

How can it be denied moreover that after a war which for five years had raised national aspirations to the highest pitch, the Treaty of Versailles makes a praiseworthy effort to conciliate the appeals of the future with the demands of the past? For the first time the need of international cooperation is recognized whether for Colonial administration, communications by land and water, labour legislation or means of preventing war. For the first time also instead of attempting like the Holy Alliance to build for all time, an agency was created by the Treaty itself for future evolution and improvement. I shall have something to say later, with special reference to the ratification of the Treaty by the United States, about the League of Nations.* How from a higher standpoint can one ignore the fact that the whole world looked to victory not only to end the war but also to organize peace? How would it be organized? There were many who, without even suspecting it, felt the necessity for such an organization. As Mr. Lloyd George said after visiting the battlefields: "In presence of so many ruins one understands that after all some other way must be found to settle disputes between nations." That was precisely the feeling of struggling humanity—the aspiration of all who having waged war did not wish it to begin again. It was President Wilson's sympathy with this aspiration of the conscience of mankind that accounted for the immense popularity he enjoyed after the Armistice. Whatever one may think of the enactments embodied in Chapter I of the Treaty of Versailles; what-

*See Chapter XIV, pages 462-463.

Digitized by Google

ever one may think of the terms of the Covenant, no one can deny the universal aspiration echoed therein.

What does the result amount to? France though often accused of systematic hostility to the League of Nations has proved by her acts that she wanted something more and something better than the Conference gave. France it was who persistently demanded the creation of an international military force, the organization of permanent supervision over national Armies. France it was who from first to last urged the logical and clear solution without which the influence of any League of Nations is necessarily restricted. The French proposals were rejected by the very Powers who were supposed to champion the idea to which France was represented as being opposed. To tell the truth the reception accorded by the United States Senate to a milder Covenant than that proposed by the French representatives, relieves me from dwelling upon the reasons of parliamentary prudence which led Mr. Wilson to oppose M. Leon Bourgeois' amendments.

The Covenant is a timid effort—though thought by some to be too daring—towards an improved organization of international relations. However imperfect, it may still serve as a basis for future solutions. In the Sarre, for instance, it has already given positive results. To be sure, the decision of the United States Senate deprived the League of Nations of an essential element of authority; and the limitation of its powers justifies M. Clemenceau in having refused to look upon it for the present as an adequate guarantee. But the way is clear for further progress. In what direction will the evolution made possible by Article 26 of the Covenant proceed? It would be rash to form a judgment in advance. But, no matter how real the difficulty, so strongly emphasized by the policy of the United States, of conciliating a supreme international law with the sovereignty of nations, the fact remains that whoever is not deaf to the demands of the future must by patient labour prepare for the coming of such a law.

The Treaty of Versailles furnished a plan which though

Digitized by Google

incomplete and imperfect, nevertheless constitutes the first united step towards world legislation taken by Governments. This also emphasizes the liberal tendency which marks the Treaty of Peace. It has been said that this tendency was repudiated at the very moment of its assertion by the fact that Germany is not a member of the League. Who does not feel that following an international crime like that of 1914, a probationary period was the least that could be demanded of its perpetrator? Not one of the Powers that signed the Treaty of Versailles but hopes to see Germany grow worthy by reform of her institutions and of her mentality to become a member of the league of the Nations she once dreamed of enslaving. But that time is not yet come. Two years after the Armistice Germany showed no signs of repentance. Read and listen. What do we find?

Public opinion in full unrest, dominated by skilfully nourished hate which obstinately hides from her her sanguinary responsibilities and the nobility and value of voluntary amends. There are doubtless a few men here and there who discern the abyss of disappointment and ruin into which Germany will be plunged by the survival of her detestable warlike spirit. But such men are rare exceptions. Doubtless one may read now and then in the *Sozialistichen Monatshefte* that "the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France is by no means an outrage but an historic act of justice," or even that "it is only right to call upon German intellectuals to retract the famous manifesto of the ninety-three, as irreconcilable with a spirit of sincerity." But such opinions are lost in an ocean of disappointed ambitions, passionate incomprehension, and bitter jealousy. Germany is in the state of mind of a gambler who is a bad loser. She blames the whole world for the fault that is hers alone. France naturally comes in for a goodly portion of her hate, centuries of history are behind it. Instead of trying to understand, she is satisfied to accuse. There is no place in such a national spirit for any of that progress which might be hoped for, if a little light could penetrate the German con-

Digitized by Google

science. This nation which in 1914 believed only in force now believes only in fraud.

The Treaty recorded this and was framed accordingly. Before welcoming Germany those who, at the price of their blood, averted the impending danger of her domination now have the right to insist upon certainty. And in such things certainty can only come as the result of a long series of acts. The key to Germany's redemption is in her own hands. It is only fair that this should be so. The justice of the peace is in nowise lessened thereby.

IV

Such are the political, economic and social bases of new France—of that France who, after the merciless war waged mainly upon her soil, wants peace and work. With these she is sure of her future—a future of reconstruction, of production and of liberty. But it is not enough for her that that future be assured, she needs it to be near. And so she must have the support in peace of those who stood shoulder to shoulder with her in war. I add that the unity she demands is not for herself alone, but is essential to all.

We have seen for months, in books and papers published in English—which although representing only a minority in their respective countries form nevertheless a noisy minority—an accusation against France, an accusation of imperialism, so vague, so indefinite, so venomous and so utterly foolish, that I blush to reply to it. Imperialism? Where? When? Why? France is the oldest of European nations—the nation whose moral unity is strongest and most coherent. And so she has no need of artificial stimulants, misused by others. For forty-three years she protested against the mutilation of 1871. Never in war nor in peace has she dreamed of inflicting such mutilation upon her enemies. France victorious—I ask my British and American friends never to forget it—has placed under her sovereignty no single human being who was not French body and soul. Within the frontiers of new Europe ethnic

Digitized by Google

minorities have here and there been included for reasons of necessity I have already stated. France consented to forego any such thing and in a district like the Sarre, considerable parts of which had been French for centuries, she accepted a plebiscite. France has taken no undue advantage of her power. France has claimed only her rights. She issues from war bleeding and weakened, but true to her high ideals.

Imperialism? The threat of war? France more than any other country aspires to permanent peace. Those who say the contrary are either agents of Germany or, if they speak in good faith, know nothing of what France has suffered. They should see our ruined towns; our devastated fields; our pillaged factories; they should visit our French families mourning 1,400,000 of their dead. Then they will understand that a nation which has suffered thus from war is for all time the enemy of war.

Imperialism? People say this because French troops are to be seen in the four corners of Europe—not only on the Rhine, but in Schleswig, Upper Silesia and Carinthia. Let those who make this reproach in England and in America consult their own consciences! The Treaty, because it had to, provided an international police force for those territories, the future of which was to be decided by popular vote, an international force to be supplied by all the Powers. The United States did not ratify it. Great Britain shirked, as in Upper Silesia, the duty she had undertaken. France was left alone, or almost alone with Italy, to perform the ungrateful task of policeman of justice, thus setting an example of perfect loyalty to their pledged faith. To reproach them for this would in some cases be even more thoughtless than unjust. France has taken the Treaty of Peace seriously, just as she took the war. If others have done otherwise is France to blame?

Imperialism? In the last analysis it means that the French people demand the enforcement of the Treaty which put an end to the war. That is the real complaint against France! To this charge of Imperialism France can proudly

Digitized by Google

plead "Not guilty;" for it is France who here stands for justice and truth. When after six months of discussion an agreement has been signed in which each party to secure essential unanimity sacrificed some of its demands, it would be doubly immoral to go back on the pledged word; immoral because when millions of men have died to insure respect of Treaties, Governments, for whom victory was won by these fallen heroes, cannot adopt the "scrap of paper" attitude without dishonour; immoral because sacrifices made to the principle of unanimity would be worthless if, once the Treaty came into force, its clauses were to be open to discussion. Two instances: Great Britain and the United States on June 28, 1919, promised France their military assistance in the event of aggression by Germany. Neither of these undertakings has, for reasons that are known, come into force. Is France to be accused of Imperialism because she now declares, on the strength of Article 429 of the Treaty of Versailles,* that under this circumstance she will not evacuate the left bank of the Rhine? All the Allies have promised each other full and complete support for the enforcement of the financial clauses of the Treaty of Peace. One of them by its failure to ratify the Treaty is not officially represented on the Reparations Commission and another from month to month suggests subversion of France's rights. Is France to be accused of Imperialism if, holding to the Treaty, she insists by every means at her disposal, that Germany shall make good what she has destroyed?

France and her people, which some of our Press for political reasons depict as embittered and discouraged, are at work! Since 1914, the real France has been made clear in the eyes of men. Alone, almost unaided, she halted the Germans at the Marne; she lost 1,364,000 killed, 740,000 mutilated, 3,000,000 wounded and 490,000 prisoners; she had at the front in the fifty-second month of the war, 350,000 more men than in 1914; she contrived despite the loss of eighty-five per cent. of the metallurgic resources

*See Chapter VI, pages 209-212.

Digitized by Google

of the country, to increase the output of war material by nearly 1,500 per cent.; in two years since the Armistice, despite the burden of a debt increased from 35,000 millions to 255,000 millions, she has spent 20,000 millions on reconstruction and returned to their homes seventy-five per cent. of the people driven away by invasion. That in ten lines is what France has done. To lack faith in themselves the French would have to forget what they have done. So there can be no question of their recovery. France will recover. But she is determined to recover quickly and not to bend for fifty years beneath the burden which a just peace has placed upon other shoulders. It is of vital importance to France in her present revival to gain thirty or forty years. It is this vital importance which makes essential the enforcement of the peace; the placing of Germany in a position in which she can do no further harm; the payment by Germany for what she has destroyed. It is this vital importance which in honour binds the Allies of France to aid her in these things. Will it be difficult? Yes, doubtless, but life is a struggle. There will be resistance by the Germans! Yes, again. But is the past so quickly forgotten? Is the last fortnight of June, 1919, forgotten?* Is Count von Brockdorff's resistance forgotten with its accompaniment of loud protest? Is that monstrous bluff forgotten which, but for M. Clemenceau, would have been entirely successful? Forgotten also in presence of the firmness of the Allies, first the hesitation, then the lowered tone; and soon the change of teams, the arrival of MM. Muller and Bell and finally the signing? Germany will always be ready to change teams if the Allies do not change principles.

Addressing the French Parliament, M. Clemenceau made a statement on this subject which all the victors should read, learn and digest.

"A cataclysm," he said, "has overtaken the world..... You must not think that after such an upheaval we are going to bring

*See Chapter III, pages 120-122.

Digitized by Google

you pages of writing, which one after the other will be voted, approved and ratified by the Chambers and that that will be the end of it and we shall all be able to go home; all wrongs in process of being righted, all precautions taken against a new outbreak and everybody able to say: Verily we have a paper! Now we can sleep! Well! Nothing of the kind! The life of mankind is not a life of sleep!

"Life is but a struggle. That struggle you can never get rid of. My idea of life is a perpetual conflict whether in war or in peace. I think it was Bernhardi who said: 'War is but politics pursued in another manner.' We can reverse the aphorism and say: 'Peace is but war pursued in another manner.'

"When a treaty comes before you, a treaty which has I don't know how many hundred clauses dealing with all kinds of questions, you must not forget that these so complex provisions will be of worth only by what you do. The Treaty will be what you make it.

"If you go to peace joyfully, as our men went to war, you will give it life; you will make it worth while, you will make it of service to mankind.

"If you waste time thinking of things which may never happen, of things that men of law love to write books about, what will happen? You will discredit the Treaty, you will discourage those who won the victory; you will make them believe that you are incapable of realizing a peace that insures safety.

"When you will have done this fine thing, you will be able to praise yourselves—nobody else will. The Treaty will be voted or will not be voted. But you will have given your country a thing of death instead of a thing of life. And if you have thought for a moment that we have been able to make a peace which will do away with the need for watchfulness between the nations of Europe which only yesterday were shedding their blood without stint upon every front, well then it means that you are unable to understand us!"

The fundamental truth dwells in these strong words. We have no choice, nor have our Allies. If we want the war and the victory to bear fruit, we must cleave to the soul of the Alliance. This is not alone a moral duty; it is an essential fact. Those unwieldy bodies at which it is the fashion to scoff, League of Nations, Reparations Commission, Military Supervisory Commission, are the means to

Digitized by Google

achieve our end. They are the concrete expression of essential unity. It is their duty to bring it to pass. If they do not, the Treaty will not be enforced and, as time goes on and Germany after a half century recovers from her defeat, all the old perils of before the war will arise again for all of us, with bankruptcy into the bargain. I say all the old perils and I mean it. For France it would again be the direct threat to her national independence. But for Italy also, and Belgium and Great Britian—even for the United States—the German danger in all its insidious and penetrating forms would soon reappear in economics, politics and morals. If the unity of the Allies be broken, Germany will begin again. It is on the continent that Great Britain must defend herself against the German danger. It is in Europe that the United States finds its safeguard against the same danger. Isolated from the others no one of the victors would be certain to overcome the resistance which Germany is already preparing. Doubtless, as Roosevelt said, it is simpler for each to live at home, like a small tradesman in a little shop, than to work together. But the obligations of the war survive our military triumph and impose the same duties.

Consider France in all her glorious and bloodstained history. It was France who taught the world justice. And to justice she remains faithful. Her conception of the rules governing the relations of individuals is that which the masses aspire to see extended in the future to relations between nations. France it was who proclaimed the higher ideals of freedom of thought, equality of citizens, abolition of privileges and respect of human dignity. Consider France in 1914, taken unawares by sudden invasion, fighting for her life *sans peur et sans reproche.* Consider her people standing together more than four years in the most desperate struggle of all history; a people mild and strong, unselfish to excess, capable of mistakes costly to itself alone; industrious as none other; liberal, wise and free, above all loving justice. Foreigners too often judge France by the excesses of isolated individuals who do not

Digitized by Google

represent the nation. The nation lives on—eternal in its pure and noble spirit. France is a democracy which has not forgotten what autocracy cost it, in 1815 as in 1871. France is a democracy which conscious of itself is determined to be true to itself and often—as very truly said by an American, Mr. Morton Fullerton—expresses as French ideals, those general ideals which civilization could not repudiate without danger.

France asks one thing only—that the pledged word be kept. While demanding it and refusing to abandon hope of obtaining it, is she idle and mourning, a prey to despair? No! She is working, without outside aid, to rebuild and to reorganize after the unheard-of ordeal through which she has passed; to rebuild and to reorganize for her own safety and for the safety of the whole world. This country is my country. Like all Frenchmen, I have the right to be proud of her, lovingly proud. But in this book I have confined myself to facts, to figures, to documents, the stern evidence of which I place before the consciences of the British and American peoples.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV

FRANCE, GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

France and Great Britain were the two pillars of victory. But for the French Army and the British Fleet, Germany would have won the war. That is the dominant fact of the age in which we live. If our two countries ever came to forget it they would be pulling down with their own hands the structure cemented by their blood.

This friendship, so strong and true, is at times difficult of practice. The past accounts for that. History has now and then recorded Franco-British agreements. But as a rule they have had no morrow. In 1801 the people of London cheered Bonaparte's envoy, Colonel de Lauriston, come to ratify peace, but a few months later, war broke out again and lasted until Waterloo. In 1838 the city enthusiastically welcomed Maréchal Soult, the Ambassador of Louis-Philippe at Queen Victoria's coronation; but, less than two years later came the crisis of 1840. Under Napoleon III English and French troops together won the Crimean war, but this alliance did not last and, in 1860, Queen Victoria advised "a regular crusade against France." One of our historians, Albert Sorel, wrote thirty years ago: "There may be—there have been—understandings between France and England to preserve the existing order; but England never has been and never can be an ally of France so long as France does not renounce expansion." Lord Chatham, a century earlier had expressed the same idea in another form when he said: "The only thing England has to fear here below is to see France become a commercial and colonial maritime power." For a century and a half, from 1688 to 1815, sixty-one years of war—the war of the Augs-

Digitized by Google

burg League (1688-1697), the war of the Spanish Succession (1701-1711), the war of the Austrian Succession (1742-1748), the Seven Years War (1756-1763), the American War (1778-1783), the wars of the Revolution and of the Empire, (1793-1815)—pitted France and England against each other. Wars separated by periods of precarious peace, and in peace deep and mutual distrust. Such was the law of the past.

Circumstances on the one hand, the will of a man of genius on the other, modified this situation which seemed destined by historical fates to last forever. After a century in which Algeria, Tunis, Western and Central Africa, the Niger, the Congo, Madagascar, Oceania, Indo-China, Egypt, Morocco, had in swift succession brought the two countries into conflict, less than ten years sufficed to establish, consolidate and seal their entente on the field of battle. For after 1870, Great Britain understood that Germany, not France, threatened the British Empire; for Queen Victoria, ever respectful of insular traditions, had been succeeded in the person of Edward VII, by a sovereign who had direct experience, and personal information of modern political developments. Bismarck after his victory had tried to bolster up Anglo-German friendship, the necessary complement of the Treaty of Frankfort. He had succeeded. "I am English in Egypt," he said one day. And a few months later, he added: "England is worth more to us than Zanzibar and the whole East Coast of Africa."

William II and Prince von Bülow were less prudent. Europe was too small for their ambitions and not content with territorial gains and political supremacy there, they were determined that Germany's future should be upon the sea. In a few years under their impulse cousin "landrat" began to navigate, to trade, to conquer. Germany's foreign commerce rose from 7,000 millions in 1892 to 15,000 millions in 1906; her naval fleet from 9 battle-ships in 1898 to 70 battle-ships and cruisers in 1913. Thus, as her Chancellor said, Germany prepared to "go forth into the world, sword in one hand, spade and trowel in the other." Thus,

Digitized by Google

she asserted her intention to create a "Greater Germany." In all respects and with extraordinary rapidity she became a world power, justifying Treitschke's proud prophecy: "When the German flag protects a vast Empire, to whom will the scepter of the universe belong? Will it not be Germany's mission to assure the peace of the world?" England, which in 1870 had had no premonition of this peril, now saw it arising at her doors. German expansion changed the fundamental conditions of world politics. A new era was opened by it.

This new era called for a new policy, and to this policy England came but with hesitation and in a roundabout manner. It was in 1885 that her merchants, then little heeded, for the first time called attention to the economic menace of Germany. It was only fifteen years later that seeing this menace invade the whole world, besiege the markets, cut the sea-lanes and add political pretensions to commercial ambition, Great Britian or more accurately her king, felt the necessity of reversing her alliance.

"We cannot," said Edward VII, "remain indefinitely at the mercy of the German hold-up."

This phrase is the birth-certificate of what has come to be known as the Entente Cordiale. For, once it was decided to oppose German plans for supremacy, an understanding with France was obligatory. Paradoxical from the point of view of past habits, this rapprochement was unassailable from that of practical politics. The Republic, it is true, had given our country an immense colonial empire. But, in 1904 any alarm felt over this expansion in England was a thing of the past and France's peaceful intentions had too often been proved by her acts, to permit London to have a misgiving as to the future. Economically, Anglo-French relations had always been active and cordial. They were susceptible of still further development on the basis of complementary exchanges. Politically the object was the same—the peaceful organization of a well-balanced Europe, freed from German hegemony. Despite numerous objections, Edward VII had the courage

Digitized by Google

to play his cards. In May, 1903, he came to Paris—an imprudent visit, some thought. He was welcomed and in the following August the conversations began. It was not attempted at this first meeting to formulate any general policy but merely to settle outstanding controversies. In April, 1904, this settlement was accomplished; Morocco, Egypt and Newfoundland supplied its main features.

For France this agreement, no matter how limited in general effectiveness, came at the right time. It was on the eve of the Russian defeat in Manchuria. English friendship thus asserted itself at a time of semi-isolation. There was of course no question of political alliance, still less of military undertakings. All that was done was to show the world that we could converse and eliminate local points of friction. But this in itself changed the essential factors of the European problem. Bismarck's hope some day to see a collision between the "English and French engines," was dashed. The principal instrument of German domination was broken. By the Anglo-French rapprochement Europe eager for peace could turn in peace towards equality and equilibrium. If Germany had been willing to cooperate, a long stability would have ensued. But Germany was not willing to cooperate. First in 1905, in Morocco, then in the Orient she began her threats and her bluster which by pressure and counter-pressure led to the war of 1914. I have given at the beginning of this book the logical sequence of events and will not go over this ground again here. I will confine myself to the evolution and strengthening of the Anglo-French relations under this German influence. Another link was formed in 1908 after the Casablanca incident. Another in 1909 after the Bosnian affair. Still a third in 1911 after Agadir. Then occurred the first conferences between the two General Staffs, which as I have already shown still avoided any positive engagement. The two countries, fully conscious of the necessity of an agreement but keeping free from all promises, continued thus to feel their way down to 1914. On the evening of the very day when the first Germans

Digitized by Google

crossed the French frontier, Great Britain still reserved her decision. The next day she merely promised to bar the Channel to any attack by the German fleet against the French coast. The day following, however, the violation of Belgium brought the British Empire to the rescue of the scrap of paper and for fifty-two months was forged between the two countries that complete unity whose triumph was crowned by the Treaty of Versailles.

Such are the remote origins of our present relations. They shed light to some extent on the difficulties which beset both in war and in peace this indispensable friendship. "England is an island," said Michelet, "and that explains her whole history." England is an island and that island for centuries has accustomed itself to fear everything from the isthmus to the shores of which are held by France. Royal jealousies, Napoleonic wars, colonial conflicts have since the Middle Ages poisoned the atmosphere in which, for the salvation of the world, trust and friendship were henceforth to flourish. There was friction. There were collisions. But yet together and for five and a half years France and Great Britain bore the brunt of the hardest of wars and the most exacting of peaces. Together they defended the land and held the seas. Together they beat Germany. That makes it worth while to continue, and when incidents arise to search our souls together, for that alone will make continuance possible. It is as necessary to-day in peace as it was yesterday in time of war. What would this peace amount to in the present state of Europe if France and Great Britain, forgetting the work they had accomplished in common, were no longer to stand, shoulder to shoulder, to assure its maintenance and enforcement?

Great Britain's rôle in the war was enormous. Without speaking of the courage of her soldiers who from month to month made magnificent strides both in quantity and quality, her fleet which bottled up the German Navy in its ports, enabled the Allies to live, to arm, to gather strength and to win. This inestimable service Great Britain

Digitized by Google

crowned by transporting in her vessels, during the last eight months of the war, seventy per cent. of the American Army. Throughout the war France and Great Britain adhered loyally to the declaration of September, 1914, and were always united as to the end to be attained. But as to means to be employed what disagreements arose! I took part in most of those discussions and I remember especially those at Versailles and in London in the summer of 1918. If I recall them here, it is to throw light upon more recent discussion; to show public opinion in both countries that these discussions were in no way unprecedented or unexpected; drive home into English and French brain alike this fundamental idea that relations will never be easy between the two peoples because we neither think nor feel in the same way and also because the difficulty in reaching agreements lies much less in the nature of the problems to be solved than in the diversity of national temperaments. The history of the war proved this. And how much more the history of peace?

The preceding chapters have hidden nothing of the heat of our discussions. What caused this heat? Opposition of principles? No. But over the application of every principle arose difficulties due to differences of mental process and to divergent traditions. Do you want an extreme, coarse and even distorted expression of these divergences? Then read Mr. Keynes' book. But when you read it, do not forget that the contradictions he exaggerates to such an absurd extent really existed, though in much less degree. The Englishman in his island behind his walls of water is incapable, whatever he does, of grasping the point of view of the French with the open frontier twice violated in fifty years; and there you have—in its essential causes—the long discussion over the left bank of the Rhine. The Englishman who has not like France had to defend himself for fifteen centuries against German attacks, treats war as a sport and is inclined to say when it is over, "Let's shake hands and make it up." Hence the serious misunderstanding over the conditions necessary to the admission of Ger-

Digitized by Google

many into the League of Nations. The Englishman who has suffered little in the course of his history from the troubles brought upon Europe by German ambitions, hates the Slavs who have been his rivals both in the Balkans and in Asia: the Englishman understands nothing of the instinctive policy of France which, from Louis XV to M. de Freycinet, has sought in Eastern Europe a counter-weight to German power: and there we have the great quarrel over Dantzig and Upper Silesia which Mr. Lloyd George, deaf to the arguments of M. Clemenceau and of Mr. Wilson, grudges to Poland. The Englishman despite the heavy taxes he imposed upon himself during the war, despite the election promises of 1913—"Germany will pay to the last farthing"—did not attach the same supreme importance to reparations as did devastated France. British shipping sunk has been replaced by new construction and paid for, in large part, by Allied or neutral cargoes. Not a foot of English soil served as a battlefield. So to settle a monotonous controversy England is ready for lump sum solutions and debt reductions which represent a tolerable burden for her but mean bankruptcy for France; and here we have the whole gist of the financial discussion which I have outlined above and which, beginning before the Treaty was signed, has continued to grow once it came into force. I might give other instances but the result would always be the same.

These problems so lengthily discussed in 1919 were settled in almost every instance as France suggested. I have told in detail of the two great Franco-British crises at the Conference—the first in March before the Treaty was handed to the Germans, the second in June after that event. I have quoted in full the French Note of April 2, in which M. Clemenceau said to Mr. Lloyd George: "If you find the peace too harsh, let us give Germany back her colonies and her fleet, and let us not impose upon the continental nations alone—France, Belgium, Bohemia and Poland—the territorial concessions required to appease the beaten aggressor." I have shown that a fortnight later France received

Digitized by Google

full satisfaction on all these points. Why? Because instead of entering into endless bargainings, she had appealed on the principle itself to the inner conscience and honour of the British delegates. To preserve towards Germany the authority of the Allies by continuity of their common policy; to enforce a Treaty which appeals to all the Allies and not to Germany only as a just peace; to remember that the Treaty being a compromise no one of its clauses can be modified without jeopardizing the whole structure—such were yesterday the essential conditions of the re-establishment of order in the world; to-morrow they will be just as essential.

It was thus and thus only that maintaining Franco-British friendship and even sealing it by an agreement unparalleled in British history M. Clemenceau made our French contentions prevail. He did this by moral influence to which Mr. Lloyd George never remained insensible. The British Minister, so impulsive and at times so quick to take offense, was often swayed by his French colleague to whom he bore real affection and respect. In the most trying days of the Peace Conference it was never in vain that M. Clemenceau reminded him of the trying days of the war. M. Clemenceau's appeals were made not in official discussion rendered formal by the necessary presence of an interpreter, but man to man, in personal talks where plain truths forcefully stated mingled with appeals that swayed the heart, where the fire of the old Celt melted the stubborn Welshman out of his British prejudices and, if I may use the expression, "disinsularized" him. Besides a French atmosphere pervaded the discussion, the atmosphere of the near-by battlefields which Mr. Lloyd George frequently visited. Our contact with our Allies was direct and permanent. The familiarity of long effort in common permitted us to approach them at all hours, to prepare at dawn the work of the day and in the evening to consolidate the results.

Laborious and difficult, this peace was made and, despite so many disagreements, Great Britain and France

Digitized by Google

both placed their signatures to the Treaty in a neutral spirit of abiding and warm friendship. Since the coming into force of the Treaty what has become of this cordial unity? The history of 1920 must answer that question!

II

This history is all contained in two facts. France, though armed with the Treaty, accepted in 1920 the English contentions she had rejected in 1919; and in spite of these concessions, repugnant to her interest and to her right, she has not retained the cordial intimacy which M. Clemenceau had succeeded in giving to Franco-British relations in 1919 while firmly refusing the things his successors have consented to. Surrender of war criminals; economic memorandum; occupation of Frankfort; reparations; conferences at San Remo, Hythe, Boulogne, and Spa; nearly always France gives way but every time confidence dwindles, French delegates returning from these meetings bitterly exclaiming: "We were undone! Yet we had to give way in order to save the Entente." And the Entente itself for which so much had been sacrificed seemed less cordial and less certain after each meeting!

The development of such a state of mind is a dangerous thing! Let me say with all the emphasis at my command that it is unfair to France, unfair to Great Britain and harmful to both. It is unfair to France. The splendour of her war effort; the moderation of her peace demands; the magnitude of her sacrifices entitled France to make her voice heard especially when she is in the right. It is unfair to Great Britain. Obdurate as she may be in business matters, selfish as she often is, Great Britain for five long and tragic years was deaf neither to the appeals of sentiment nor of reason. But for Great Britain to hear she must be spoken to in a way she understands. If we speak to her face to face—as friend to friend—we can speak strongly, we can speak "after the manner of the English, in straight flung words and few." If we speak

Digitized by Google

rightly and at the right time we are certain to make our point and to overcome prejudice and egotism. But speak we must. Four and a half years of war and fifteen months of peace negotiations warrant this assertion. Those who, like myself, have lived through those six eventful years refuse to admit that in a few short weeks the respective situations of either of the two great nations or of their Governments can have undergone the complete change which the events of 1920 would seem to indicate.

Difficulties and disagreements between France and England? There have been many; there are some to-day and there always will be some. But there was a time when these differences were composed by reason, far from the enemy's sight and without any sacrifice of prestige by either of the principals. When in 1917 England contemplated the evacuation of Salonica; when, in 1918, she advocated the short-sighted policy of reducing the number of her divisions in France from sixty to forty; when, at the beginning of 1919, Mr. Lloyd George said: "To make Germany sign, let us humour her," and M. Clemenceau replied: "It is not for us in the presence of a defeated aggressor to ask pardon for our victory;" when England would agree neither to the occupation of the Rhine nor to the wresting of Upper Silesia and Dantzig from Germany; when after having declared "Germany shall pay for everything," she suggested in the following month of June the fixing of a certain lump sum which would have crippled the claim for reparations; or when she proposed meeting Lenine's delegates in Paris, was it at such times—I ask—another England? Was it another Lloyd George? No, they were the same. France managed to make her view prevail, because France was in the right.

If this situation has been changed, I do not hesitate to place the initial blame upon England. Mr. Lloyd George worked very hard for our common victory. No Frenchman has the right to forget that, nor to doubt the sincerity of his admiration and affection for France. And no Frenchman can take exception to the fact that his first thought is

Digitized by Google

always of England. But his policy in 1920 was marked by many errors. To placate British labour, he countenanced too many concessions both to the Soviets and to Germany. To placate British trade, he mated business greed with political idealism. Many Frenchmen believe that in 1920 —quite unconsciously, perhaps—he adopted the very policy he had repudiated in 1919,—the policy of Mr. Keynes. Commercial interests have everywhere been put first. The hankering after immediate advantage has blurred the prospect of the future. Too many Englishmen have forgotten that—however great and decisive the part played by England in the war—her territory was neither invaded nor devastated. Too many Englishmen have failed to recognize that France, bleeding and plundered, is entitled to something better than daily advice to renounce her rights.

The vast majority of English people have not changed, nor have their truly fraternal feelings for the French people varied. But they have been told so often that France, and France alone, has retarded the coming of real peace by insisting on the literal execution of a Treaty devised to bind the victors together as it binds the vanquished to them, that moral misunderstanding has ensued. So little has been done to explain to the English people our absolute need for full reparation—to make them see that if France is not to be bowed down for half a century under the crushing weight of an unjust burden, she must have full reparation—that a political cleavage has arisen which irritates men's nerves without enlightening their minds. But reduced to its basic elements the problem is a simple one. If the responsible leaders of Great Britain, if those who control British policy have already come to the conclusion that the financial clauses of the Treaty of Peace —which they solemnly signed in 1919—cannot be executed, it is their duty at least to offer France a guarantee for the minimum they would have her accept when urging her to abate her just demands. This they have not done. It is a serious mistake, fraught with danger to both countries alike. Thus the campaign for the revision of the Treaty

Digitized by Google

has risen from lower levels to the highest Government spheres. The surprise and sorrow of Frenchmen are as great as the esteem and friendship which, after our common victory, they entertain for our Great Ally across the Channel.

This is the truth, but it is not the whole truth. British efforts against the Treaty of Versailles have had a disastrous effect and yet, by an unheard-of paradox, these efforts have found supporters in France. What supporters? The very men who, when the Treaty was signed, complained that it was not drastic enough. Complex as their motives have been, their efforts have been convergent. Some have striven to show that the Republic is incapable of negotiating a sound Treaty; others that the bourgeoisie is incapable of establishing a lasting peace; others again that a peace negotiated by M. Clemenceau must necessarily be detestable. All, however, have worked hand in hand to assail a Treaty already subjected to many foreign attacks; all have worked to weaken a contract which they had previously proclaimed inadequate. These critics, whether they intended it or not, have shaken public confidence and weakened the Treaty of Peace. Their action has been exerted in successive waves. It began in the spring of 1919. It continued throughout the summer and its manifestations have grown increasingly frequent. Look at the American papers and you will see how unjust and unbridled attacks in the French Parliament furnished ready weapons to those opposed to the ratification of the Treaty. Read the English papers of more recent date and you will see how these same continental criticisms have been used to support the growing demand for the revision of the Treaty. Examine the German papers and you will see how Germany—interpreting so many and such violent attacks as an indication of adverse public opinion in France, has conceived hopes of defeating the document in which its downfall is recorded. When undermining the Treaty, in the interest of parties and of individuals in our internal politics, French critics have not stopped to consider that they were

Digitized by Google

also undermining it in the interest and to the advantage of Germany as well. Their game of vying with one another to find fault has been Germany's game. They have not seen the encouragement they were giving to Pan-Germanism and this blindness, I regret to say, has been met with even in the highest Government circles.

Simultaneously M. Clemenceau's defeat in the presidential election altered the arrangements which had been made, in December, 1919, for the future of the Conference and, reversing these arrangements, caused the inter-allied headquarters for the execution of the peace to be transferred from Paris to London. It was no longer the French Prime Minister but the British Prime Minister who presided over and directed them. Mr. Lloyd George had to confer with M. Millerand through an interpreter; and intimate understanding was impossible in brief meetings. The "diplomatic channel" with its Notes and Counter-Notes, its delay and quibbling, again became paramount. Never in 1920 did Mr. Lloyd George have that direct view, that physical sensation of France and of Europe, which M. Clemenceau gave him in a few words at decisive moments. Those few Frenchmen whose long collaboration enabled them to discuss things freely with the British Prime Minister likewise disappeared, following M. Clemenceau into retirement. No one was left who could speak with that directness—may I say that sharpness—which was so often necessary; none who could reduce to right proportions the personal attacks of certain political writers who unintentionally have done France so much harm during the past few months.

At the same time France employed the worst possible method of negotiation—weakness in discussion followed by resounding reactions after agreement had been reached—that is, the thing most repugnant to British and American minds. Tell them beforehand what you are going to do, even if it is most disagreeable to them, they will acknowledge your right to do as you please. Do it without telling them and the displeasure they would feel in any event

Digitized by Google

will be deepened by annoyance at being treated without candour, and this feeling will endure.* I remember one day during the war having warned an American Minister, who in perfect good faith absolutely refused to entertain a request made by the French Government, that I intended in a public speech to appeal to the people to decide between us. Because I myself told him what I was going to do, he regarded as correct and "fair" a step which would have exasperated him if he had first heard of it through the papers, and when he saw three weeks later that the public was on our side he gave way with the best grace in the world. In dealing with Anglo-Saxons, direct hits are the ones that count. Indirect methods are dangerous and more dangerous still when before surprising these same Anglo-Saxons by a brusk initiative you have allowed them to think for months that you do not dare to withstand them. Insular isolation has been thus re-established—commercial insularity, electoral insularity, political insularity—and the movement for the revision of the Treaty has grown. And if it be objected that in saying this, I attach too great importance to the personal equation in politics, I would answer that politics imply actions and actions imply individuals.

These things must be recalled if it is to be understood why every decision arrived at in 1920 lent itself to bitter controversy; why certain solutions repugnant to the Treaty put forward and rejected during the original negotiations, so frequently prevailed; why in the absence of the United States, held aloof by the failure of the U. S. Senate to ratify the Treaty, France and Great Britain have so often assumed antagonistic attitudes and jeopardized their mutual good understanding by useless haggling. An unhealthy atmosphere created by malevolent criticism of the only law

*At least twice in 1920, the French Government violated this rule. It was by the French papers that Mr. Lloyd George learned of the occupation of Frankfort. As to the recognition of Wrangel, M. Millerand's Government informed Great Britain on a Wednesday when on the Sunday and Monday preceding a conference had taken place at Hythe between the two Premiers in which not a word was said about it. In both cases telegraphic delays were blamed which merely added ridicule to lack of tact.

Digitized by Google

that should be respected by all alike; a faulty method of negotiation—due on the British side to a serious error of psychology, and on the French side to a sudden change of administration—such is the story of 1920. A British Government which forgetful of our past sufferings urges us to pay for the success of questionable combinations by the sacrifice of our rights; a French Government which in Parliament for purposes of internal politics ridicules the very document on which a few days later it had to rely in diplomatic conferences.* On the one hand unreasonable demands harshly formulated; on the other concessions granted only to be followed by vain recrimination. Mutual misunderstanding aggravated by the difference of language, by the impossibility of direct contact; a series of reciprocal lackings of consideration producing ever-increasing exasperation—such are the characteristic features of the story.

Thus a great deal of harm has been done and unless both parties change their tactics, this harm will increase. I say what I think and I hope I shall be believed. Those who helped M. Clemenceau to conduct the affairs of France during the last fifteen months of the war and the twelve months of peace negotiations cannot be suspected of under-estimating either the material power or the moral value of Great Britain. They never lost sight and they never will lose sight of the immense services rendered by England during the war, of the fact that Franco-British friendship is essential to the safety of both countries and to the peace of the world. So they have the right to recall that when conflicting interests brought the police of these two nations into opposition they succeeded in settling their differences by equitable agreements which did not place the burden of all the sacrifices upon the shoulders of only one nation and that in this manner they safeguarded the intimacy of the two coun-

*M. Millerand, the French Premier, told the Chamber of Deputies on May 28, 1920: "The Treaty of Versailles contains more promises than realities." He added on July 20, ... "It is a diplomatic instrument in which all things are asserted and nothing is settled. So it is necessary to interpret it in order to obtain tangible results."

Digitized by Google

tries. France, it is only too evident, cannot break with Great Britain. But neither can Great Britain break with France.

III

This difficulty must be overcome. But how? First by disregarding resolutely the methods followed on both sides in 1920, and returning to the franker, broader and clearer methods which enabled the two countries to win the war and make peace in common. This is the first but not the only thing. During the war France and England viewed their relations plainly and practically. France knew that, if England had lost control of the seas, the Allies would have had no more supplies or munitions. England knew that, if the French had given way on the Marne or at Verdun, the English coast would have been uncovered. Is it possible in peace—more complex, it is true, than war—to apply to Anglo-French relations a similar formula and thus set up above contingent considerations a permanent goal for the minds and wills of the two nations? I should like to try to answer this question.

France knows very well what she expects of England. What she expects of England is first of all political—that is to say—moral support. We are face to face with a beaten neighbor who prefers hatred to repentance and whose population is twenty millions greater than ours. Notwithstanding the folly of certain Frenchmen intoxicated with the idea of solitude, we need friends. What form should this friendship take? I know but one basis for friendship for nations as for individuals—loyalty and unity. Loyalty, that is to say scrupulous respect for all engagements entered into after free discussion. Unity, that is to say the desire to understand and to share each other's aspirations. In the present state of Europe and of the world a criterion: if France is not to doubt England, she must feel that England does not attach less importance to the enforcement of the peace than she herself. Will it be said that this enforcement is less directly indispensable to

Digitized by Google

Great Britain than to France? It is for this reason that Great Britain, precisely because she values France's friendship, must be as vigilant as France herself with regard to it. Even if she believes that France is making a mistake in exacting all that she has a right to, she is bound as a friend to support her.

A single example. When England publicly disavowed in March, 1920, the occupation of Frankfort by French and Belgian troops, she violated this fundamental principle of friendship. And I quite agree that there might well be a difference of opinion as to this step which I myself looked upon as both justified and utterly useless. But on no account should the enemy of yesterday have been permitted to see that there was a division; above all, an attempt should have been made to reach an understanding. Suppose that on the pretext of policing German fishermen what is left of the German fleet had cruised about the mouth of the Thames and fired its guns. Do you believe that the British Admiralty would not immediately and on its own responsibility have taken measures of reprisal? This is precisely what France did at Frankfort when on pretext of strikes the Reichwehr invaded the neutral zone which the Treaty of Versailles had forbidden it to enter. France on this occasion would have liked Great Britain to feel as she felt, as Great Britain indeed would have felt in her place. France would have liked also in other matters, reparations, Poland, etc., to have Great Britain make an effort to agree to policies which have always been in strict accordance with the solemn undertakings entered into on June 28, 1919. That is what I call moral support.

France also needs the material support of Great Britain. She needs coal—coal at reasonable prices and with priority of delivery at least to the amount which France lost defending, over her destroyed mines, the coast of England. It is not fair that France should pay more for that coal than the English pay for it and that France should pay for it at the same prices as the neutrals of yesterday. Lord Northcliffe asserted this in an interview in November,

Digitized by Google

1920—I in turn say the same thing. It is unfair also that in order to maintain her export prices, England should force us, as she did at Spa, to pay more for German coal than the price fixed by the Treaty of Versailles. France needs shipping and here I am not one of those who underrate the immense sacrifices made by Great Britain for victory, but I ask her to take France's sacrifices also into account. I know full well that submarine warfare destroyed seventeen million tons, nine millions of which were British; that the German and Austrian fleets together amounted to only five and a half million tons and that Great Britain replaced only thirty per cent. of her losses by enemy ships. But Great Britain should remember that our arsenals and shipyards were busy making war material for all the Allies and that France did not build a ship for five years. Great Britain should remember that France during the war, because of lack of tonnage, paid British, American and neutral carriers 12,000 million francs in freight charges. Great Britain should remember France's lack of passenger ships and that she is not even able to run the regular pre-war services to her own colonies.

I say that here, as in all other things, mere commercial fair play is not enough, that what is needed is whole-hearted support, the kind of support France gave in the tragic days of 1918 when Pétain's twenty-four divisions were rushed in a few hours to replace Gough's Army. Last but not least France needs financial support and here again I am far from underrating the enormous financial sacrifices made by Great Britain in the war and the thousands of millions she lent us. But I ask her not to forget Lord Derby's words already quoted that "her Lancashire has not been destroyed." In France, this destruction was complete and gave to the Armies of Liberty their common field of battle on which Allied victory saved English soil from the horrors of invasion. What can be done for France? Financial unity, the difficulties of which I have already explained? A French loan in England—promised to M. Clemenceau, but never floated? This is not the place to

Digitized by Google

discuss ways and means. It is sufficient to raise the questions and to add that, no matter what happens, France must be able to count on Great Britain for full support when she demands of Germany the reparations written in the Treaty which England signed. During the war we bought much wheat, steel, coal, explosives, freights; in return we freely gave the best of French soil, and 1,400,000 French lives. That is an argument which tells on the English heart.

That is what France expects of England and I have no reason to hold any of it back. But England also needs France and I want to say how, with equal frankness. England first of all needs France for her safety. The last war convinced the most incredulous of this fact. If some day either a renewal of German aggression or the obscure development of Russian forces were to threaten France and Belgium in the East, then and for the same reasons Great Britain would be threatened too. Without Belgium and without France, Great Britain has no battlefield on the Continent to deploy her forces and protect her coast. When the road to Paris is open to invasion neither Calais nor Dover is safe. Every thinking Briton knows that and is not likely to forget it. But Great Britain not only needs France to be safe, in order to feel safe herself, she also needs France to be prosperous. It is to England's own interest that France should rise from her ruins because the twenty million bushels of wheat which cannot longer be grown in our devastated regions force us to compete with British buyers in the grain markets of the world; because the ruin of our mines, no matter how high the price of English coal, must weigh in the long run upon the reduced production of English mines; because throughout the whole world our colonial Empires in contact are affected by each other's crisis.

And I go further still. Great Britain needs France as an element of stability and restraint in world politics, especially—and I say it plainly—in Anglo-American relations. The war revolutionized these relations. It created ties

Digitized by Google

which I trust may never be broken. Yet how can we overlook that often the past weighing upon the present makes difficult the most essential collaborations? How can we overlook that friction which may arise between Dominions and the United States? How can we overlook that in the modern world material and moral effects of economic struggles cannot be foreseen? And an economic struggle is even now engaged in between the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race. British and American shipyards are racing to see which can build most. In the markets of South America and of the Far East, British and American firms are struggling for supremacy. For this healthy competition to remain a healthy stimulus and not become a danger, Great Britain and America both need France as connecting-link and compensator. And how can I avoid the Irish question? I remember a day in the very midst of the war when my colleague, the British High Commissioner in the United States, asked me to place at his disposal to speak at Catholic meetings one of the military priests attached to my service. America will need to be informed to-morrow —as yesterday. America will need to be told—to-morrow as yesterday—and to be told by others than the British themselves without reference to possible solutions of the Irish problem—that during the war the Sinn-Feiners harboured and supplied German submarines and took German gold to pay for Casement's treason. Here too Great Britain needs France—needs France on whose soil was sealed in blood the Anglo-American brotherhood of arms, France best qualified and most authorized to recall the higher interests of democratic unity which demand of the three nations ever greater faith and ever greater harmony.

For this to be, a loyal effort of mutual understanding is essential. I have the consciousness of having always worked with whatsoever ability is mine to inform my countrymen of the permanent factors of British politics. Official Great Britain must also learn to know France better. The Foreign Office is a great stronghold of traditions. Of these traditions there is one whose possible danger I would

Digitized by Google

point out. It is that which has always led Great Britain to look with favour upon the second-rate European Powers and with distrust upon the first-rate Powers. The tradition fifteen years ago led to the Entente Cordiale against a Germany of domination and so this tradition is sacred to us. Let us fear, however, that ill-interpreted it may now be turned against the very achievement which is its greatest honour. France is to-day the principal Power of Continental Europe. That is enough for some to accuse her of Imperialism. I should like at certain moments to feel sure that it is not enough to induce similar reflexes in the splendid old institution which in Downing Street clings to the ways of bygone days. Such reflexes if they were possible would constitute an injustice and an error. For France is not Germany and her victory—I think I have shown it—is a victory *à la Française* which does not deserve to be insulted by comparison with Bismarckian conquests. "Germany," said M. Clemenceau, "enslaved herself to enslave others. France frees herself to set others free." A great lesson in political psychology is contained in those few words. May the Foreign Office and all its representatives, in all parts of the world, take it loyally to heart and understand that Great Britain will always have more to fear from Germany even defeated than from France victorious!

The subject is vast. I do not flatter myself that I have exhausted it. I have tried—with a freedom of language to which twenty years of political activity in the cause of Franco-British friendship entitled me—to show the danger spots and to point out lines of action. Between British and French let us avoid haggling. Let us speak with the heart and appeal to plain honest principles. I have seen M. Clemenceau succeed by this method, other methods have since been tried out with unhappy results. I am deeply convinced that by returning to it the two peoples will make their union more enduring to their own good and to the good of mankind.

Digitized by Google

IV

The problem of Franco-American relations is no less important than that of Franco-British relations with which I have just dealt with great frankness. I want to be equally frank about Franco-American relations because democracies ought to be told the truth; and also because having myself been one with the American nation in thought, in heart and in action I venture to believe they will look upon my frankness as a proof of affection and of respect.

The basis of Franco-American friendship is indestructible; for it rests on the memory of service rendered and received without thought of self. This friendship has lasted for one hundred and fifty years. The statues of LaFayette and Rochambeau standing before the White House; their portraits hanging in the Capitol at the right and left of the Speaker, are the symbols of a living force. But before the war, each country was blissfully ignorant of the other. The two countries loved each other without knowing why. They knew little of each other. What America, to speak but of the United States, admired in us was our charm rather than our energy, our accomplishments rather than our virtues. It was neither our political genius, nor our practical capacity, nor our faculty for expansion that she admired; but our elegance, our taste, our fashions, our literature, our art. And this admiration was directed more to the past than to the present. We were in a way to become like unto a work of art in a Museum. We suffered, in the eyes of America as of the rest of the world, from the dread fact that in Europe we were the last of the vanquished. Sedan dominated our modern history, as Jena had long dominated that of Prussia. We ourselves were in a way responsible for this situation. When Frenchmen went to America to talk of France, they seldom spoke of modern France, her ideas, her resources, or her industries. When Americans, like Barrett Wendell, spoke of France as a country capable of action and by no wise stricken with national anemia, their words were received with a certain skepti-

Digitized by Google

cism. We were looked upon as an old nation resigned to secondary rank. The clear-sighted continuity of our foreign policy and the breadth of our colonial policy were alike unknown. Our religious conflicts angered the Catholics and astonished the rest of America incapable of conceiving normal relations between Church and State other than those of cordial separation. Our charm was felt, but we had little prestige or authority.

The war came. In the United States as elsewhere everyone at first believed in German victory. The overwhelming majority of the United States favoured neutrality. In July, 1914, Democrats and Republicans, Roosevelt and Wilson, were agreed about that. A few understood from the very start the enormous importance of this fight which was just beginning and came to join our ranks,—these men were exceptions. The great mass did not know, did not move. As late as 1917, I met educated people in New York who were smilingly skeptic about German atrocities. Inquiry into the responsibility for the war was avoided, and it was not only in his own party that the President won that expression of prudent gratitude: "He kept us out of war." The Marne came as a shock to this apathy and shattered the belief that Germany was invincible. Then as the war went on and fighting settled down in earnest, another belief received its death-blow: the belief in French lightness, capable of sudden effort but not of patient endurance. Months went by. America was making much money by selling raw materials to the Allies. But war profits all went into a few hands and everyone was feeling the rising cost of living. In 1916, people began to wonder if it would not be wise to stop the European war by cutting off supplies. As the presidential election drew near the question of entering the war became an issue between opposing parties. The great majority of the people, however, still favoured neutrality and a "peace without victory."

Germany it was that, under pressure of circumstances and with her usual lack of psychology, forced war upon America. At an early stage she had worked towards this

Digitized by Google

end by attacks on American shipping; but that did not satisfy her. By a series of provocations which grew worse month by month, by obstinate persistence in unheard-of absurdities, by blind contempt for the clearest warnings, the Imperial German Government dug its grave with its own hands. Tirpitz got the upper hand of Bernstorff, and Bernstorff being beaten proceeded like a true German to go Tirpitz one better. While the logical development of diplomatic correspondence was daily making it more and more inevitable for the United States to pick up the gauntlet, the German Embassy in Washington was organizing a vast conspiracy on the very soil of America. The Americans, who are naturally confiding, unraveled the threads of this intrigue with stupefaction. The general sympathy which German immigrants had enjoyed gave way to alarm and suspicion. The United States had borne the first torpedo attacks without severing relations. But the last, combined with this interior plot which was felt at work everywhere, awoke the war spirit which for thirty months had slumbered. It was recognized that the danger against which Western Europe was fighting might also reach the New World. The protection of the ocean began to appear doubtful. On April 6, 1917, the United States, directly threatened, declared war on Germany.

This war which it entered for purely American reasons was fought by the United States in a splendid spirit of union with Europe. They put into it all their power, all their will, all their heart. The United States lent its Allies —when in April, 1917, they could get no more money in New York—the sum of 15,000 million dollars. They raised five million men, nearly half of whom were in France on the day of the Armistice. By voluntary and self-imposed restrictions they were able to feed Europe. They subordinated all individual interests to the general interest by adopting a policy of production and distribution which set a standard. Their soldiers fought bravely, and France holds their memory sacred. The part played by the United States in the war, though short, was tremendous. With-

Digitized by Google

out France which saved the world at the battle of the Marne, the United States could not have fought. But without the United States the Allies could not have conquered. It was the presence of American troops that enabled them to establish their numerical supremacy. And it was the presence of American troops that enabled Marshal Foch to plan and carry out the final offensive of victory. America came into the war late. But she came in time. France knows what her aid was worth and will be forever grateful.

The hour of defeat sounds for the Germans at the end of 1918. Peace sued for at the same time as the Armistice finds the Allies in accord on general principles. I have told above the story of the frank exchange of views which efforts have at times been made to misrepresent, but about which neither then or now, the slightest shadow of ambiguity exists.* The Conference began. After so many distorted versions this book tells the truth about the peace. At the Conference the United States proved its disinterestedness by asking nothing for herself but the right to pay for and keep the 700,000 tons of German shipping interned in her own ports. Like all the Allies she defended her contentions vigorously but not in the overbearing manner sometimes ascribed to her representatives. Some of these contentions France did not accept. To reach agreement the United States, like other nations, had to accept amendments. It was the law of the four-nation peace, as it had been the law of a four-nation war. But it is equally unjust to assert either that the United States "put it over" on the Allies, or that the Allies "put it over" on the United States. The Conference was laborious; at times painful. I have explained why. But from first to last all discussions were marked by a sincerity and restraint which do them honour. The irreconcilables of the two extremist parties, the Germanists and the Imperialists—must bear the responsibility for fables with which they slandered the makers of the Treaty in order to discredit the Treaty itself. When signed the peace appeared to its makers an imperfect but honest

*See Chapter II, pages 43-76.

Digitized by Google

compromise—an unprecedented attempt to regulate the future relations of peoples on a basis of security and justice.

The Treaty thus drafted was not ratified by the United States Senate. The Treaty of Guarantee with France although favourably reported by the Commission was not even discussed. I shall not refer to the details of the ten months' battle that ended thus. The vote of the Senate pained France. Painful in itself, for like all the Allies we had made sacrifices for the sake of agreement and the final abstention of America robbed these sacrifices of their counter-benefits. Painful too in its consequences, for beyond a doubt it encouraged Germany in her policy of non-execution of the Peace Treaty. I say frankly that France did not consider the Treaty clauses as justifying the angry struggle to which they gave rise. Senator Lodge's reservations seemed to France neither indispensable nor inacceptable. She felt that no Treaty could possibly affect parliamentary prerogatives which are the very basis of democratic institutions and that there was no need of so many glosses to reserve what in practise and in theory are inalienable rights, for war cannot be waged without money, and money is in the hands of legislatures and war cannot be waged without the support of public opinion and public opinion is free. The French remembered that, no matter how formal the Franco-Russian Alliance, a vote of the French Parliament on August 3, 1914, would have sufficed to make it inoperative; and they concluded that no matter what the wording of the Covenant—a wording easily amended—the Congress of the United States would have retained all its rights.

My country has maintained a fitting reserve in dealing with these events. It could not, however, refrain from noting their consequences. In the spring of 1920, M. Alexander Redlich, editor of the *Gazette de Voss*, said to me:

"Germany is not complying with the Treaty; that is true. But if she does not comply with it, the chief cause is the vote by which the United States Senate refused to ratify it."

Digitized by Google

Germany readily believes what she wishes to be true, and she has never wished for anything more than for division among the Allies. She flattered herself that she could bring it about during the war by the Czernir offer and the Lancken proposals. She thought she had achieved it in 1919 and Count Brockdorff on his arrival at Versailles made no attempt to hide the fact. How could the secession of the United States have failed to encourage her hopes and illusions—have failed to strengthen her determination not to give up the war criminals, not to disarm, and not to pay? And I know full well that none of the men who rejected the Treaty sought such a result, nor desired to precipitate it. But at times results outstrip intentions, and this was here the case. The legal controversies to which the Treaty of Versailles led in the Capitol, the party struggles it revived, and the personal antagonisms it engendered are expressed in Europe by greater difficulty in enforcing the Treaty. We must in the mutual interests of France and of the United States face the facts of this situation and seek to remedy it.

V

It calls for serious effort, not for displays of temper. Our mutual affection is not endangered. The hearts of the two peoples still beat together. The American Government has not so far called upon France to pay back the thousands of millions it lent her, nor even the interest thereon. Everyone feels that the situation is difficult and calls for careful handling. Everyone has the same aim: peace and friendship.

We cannot, however, blind ourselves to the fact that, if it is to endure and develop, Franco-American friendship must be given more care than in the past. During the last century we loved each other at a distance, without much knowledge of each other, and absence of contact made friction impossible. Our relations were pleasant but of life in common we knew naught. War has changed all this. More than two million American soldiers came to France. They

Digitized by Google

lived there in times of great stress. Nearly eighty thousand of them now sleep their last sleep in her soil. Those who returned learned to know something of French courage. But many of them did not know or did not understand how awful was France's plight after four years of war. Some complained of living conditions and of profiteering, forgetting that the French soldiers had the same troubles and that profiteering was not unknown in America. Others were over-impressed by the comforts and flattery they found in occupied Germany, forgetful that the miserable condition of our poor villages and the weariness of our people were but an added reason for their sympathy. All were at times taken in by absurd tales, such for instance as that France made America pay rent for the trenches! In vain we denied this again and again. In vain we showed that the so-called renting was merely the taking over of the material of the trenches which was done in every sector of the front whenever a new relief arrived, not only between one Allied Army and another, but also between the various units of the same Army. I should not be surprised if many a doughboy went home with the idea firmly tucked away in the back of his head that he paid for the privilege of fighting. Finally, the warmth of appreciation rightly shown by the grateful French made many an American forget that, even if it did save the Allies, the United States entered the war to defend the rights and liberties of America.

I do not want to be charged with dotting every "i" and crossing every "t"—yet we must be plain if we are to understand each other. The war brought us into direct contact. This contact must be maintained. Let us neglect nothing that touches the souls of our two peoples—let us never grow tired of explaining ourselves to each other. For three years I have acted on this principle. Though my first duty, as French High Commissioner, was to obtain material results, in the shape of money, steel, wheat, ships, powder, explosives and countless other things, I constantly strove to develop in each country an understanding of and love for the customs and character of the other. Thou-

Digitized by Google

sands of times with the valuable help of the Committee on Public Information, my fellow-workers and I talked to Americans about France. We furnished facts and figures to the efficient Association of American National Lecturers. We created enduring ties between the similar social, religious and professional groups in the two countries. By our efforts, the Catholics, Protestants, Jews, historians, scholars and business men of America and France were brought into close relations which continue despite the non-ratification of the Peace Treaty. Thanks to the cordial cooperation of General Pershing, I succeeded in 1918 in giving seven thousand officers and soldiers of the American Army a six months' course in our Universities and Technical Schools. To every American soldier, when he left, we gave a little booklet which in a few pages expressed the gratitude of France and told her position and the part she played in winning the war. M. Clemenceau sent a memorial souvenir signed by the President of the French Republic to the family of every dead soldier. Trifling incidents perhaps, but not without interest in the moral history of the two nations. Now that the war is won we must continue and as it has proved feasible to pave the way for complete union by bringing together corresponding elements, the same policy should be pursued. It is the best way of killing in America the many untrue stories concocted against France by cunning hands we know only too well: the story that France pays no taxes: the story that France is not reconstructing: the story that she is militarist, that she is rich and discontented.

So much for the general conditions by which we may reach a good understanding based not upon propaganda—I hate the word; the thing—but upon exact information. How can our political and economic relations be adjusted for the greatest good of the two countries? One's first impulse is to speak of material aid which America could furnish to France; but however valuable this aid might be, it is not the most essential thing. Besides, up to now, with the exception of private and philanthropic initiative, it has

Digitized by Google

been non-existent. Immediately after the Armistice a number of American business men came over to offer us their help. At the same time at my request Mr. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury, asked Congress for authority to open us credits which would have enabled us to take advantage of these offers. Nothing came of it. The endeavours to keep French workmen employed and to provide work for our war factories created a protectionist policy of reconstruction which reduced foreign participation to almost nothing. Even if this was a mistake, it was a very natural one. Since then many American banks have established branches in France. Corporations for developing international commerce have been founded. Special short time credits have been negotiated. But the great current of Franco-American business has not yet begun. Burdened with war loans and income taxes, America has no liquid funds available. Even if her condition were normal, her aid would not suffice to solve the problem France must face to-day.

I have already given figures. We have a debt of 255,000 million francs, at the exchange rate of October, 1920, or 227,000 millions at par. We have to pay pensions representing a capital of 55,000 millions. We have spent 22,000 millions on reconstruction and must spend at least 120,000 millions more. No material aid from America can meet such a need. The only possible way out is for the Treaty of Versailles to be enforced and Germany made to pay what she owes. The only real help therefore that can be of definite assistance to France is that which will enable her to enforce the Peace Treaty and obtain payment of Germany's debt. In other words what France needs is political support. Political support that may entail financial aid later; if Germany pays and issues bonds the United States could buy or discount them, but now the only possible aid they can give is political and moral, by backing France when she makes her just demands. Here we have the problem in all its complexity, for it is not easy for America to demand the enforcement of a contract which

Digitized by Google

she has not even ratified. Again I am dotting my "i" and calling a spade a spade.

I know that in saying this I am contradicting an opinion which great American business men have often expressed. I know for example that in a booklet published by Mr. Otto Kahn in 1920 he maintained that the help America could give Europe and especially France was not political but economic. I think my statistics have proved that at least as far as France is concerned this is a fundamental error. America will not and cannot bear the cost of our reconstruction. The only way she can be of real help to us therefore is to unite with us politically and morally in forcing Germany to pay. The offer of economic support to the exclusion of political support carries with it a clear implication of iniquity, for in the form in which it has been proposed it would profit as much to the vanquished but uninjured aggressor as to the victors, victims not only of aggression but of systematic destruction as well. Worse still, to secure payment from Germany for her purchases, all her liquid assets which should go to reparations would be earmarked for the sellers. In discussing this purely business question people lose sight of the fact that Germany in order to pay must, as Lord Cunliffe pointed out, subject herself for purposes of reparation to a special system of production, restriction and exports. Financiers like Mr. Otto Kahn, who deal with the reconstruction of Europe *en bloc,* forget that the ruins to be rebuilt are not alike either in origin, or extent, or location. Their location:—all the ruins are in Allied countries—none in Germany. Their extent:—how can Germany's economic crisis be compared with those in France or Belgium which are aggravated by the loss of one-fourth of the national capital? Their origin:—who does not know that Germany alone is responsible for the disaster, from which she also suffers, though less than the others? The plan of Mr. Otto Kahn, whose friendship for France no one appreciates better than I, unfortunately comes back to the system of Mr. Keynes,—much, I feel certain, against its author's intentions. As a plan it is not only impractical but unjust.

Digitized by Google

And I return to my conclusion: if America wishes—and I know she does wish—to give France material help, let her begin by helping her politically, for that is the key to everything. How can this political aid be given? That is hardly for a foreigner to say. By a majority of six the United States Senate refused to ratify the Peace Treaty because the Covenant alarmed it. That is the Senate's own affair and I do not question its motives. But I venture to say that when they voted thus, the United States Senate had no intention of repudiating the principles for which America fought. The United States Senate had no intention of repudiating the right of self-determination of peoples, the right that freed Alsace-Lorraine, the Walloon districts, Schleswig, Bohemia, Transylvania, Trente and Trieste, the Croats, the Slovenes, and the Greeks of Thrace and Asia Minor. The United States Senate had no intention of repudiating the right of those attacked to be paid damages for losses inflicted by the aggressor—a right under which the victors who had been unjustly attacked confined themselves to demanding from the vanquished merely actual damages sustained and pensions, but remitted the whole of the 700,000 millions the war had cost them. Certainly the United States Senate and all America recognize the justice of this to-day as they recognized it in the past. If they do, if they really wish to see justice done, I insist that it is their duty to find some way to make Germany understand their wish and their will; for just now Germany with her usual treachery affects to believe that the United States Senate and the American people think otherwise. Germany is using the political controversy, the meaning of which she cunningly distorts, to make it appear that the United States disapproves not only of a part of the Covenant but of the entire Treaty. America owes it to itself to answer this perfidy by an act that will prove to the world that the United States is faithful in peace to the immortal principles which guided her in war.

And what is this act to be? That is for America herself to decide. It goes without saying that pure and simple

Digitized by Google

re-establishment of peace,—according to the resolution of Senator Knox, would have just the opposite effect of that for which France hopes. But between the Knox resolution and ratification there are other ways. America may ratify the Peace Treaty either with Senator Lodge's reservations or after asking the Allies to amend the Covenant. America may declare the changes she desires. There are a thousand means of reaching a satisfactory conclusion. There are a thousand means, but there is only one end. That end is to help re-establish order in Europe by helping to enforce the peace. Without law there can be no order, and the only possible law is the Treaty which Germany has signed. The United States by the part it played in the war made victory possible. By the part it will play in enforcing the peace, the United States will remain true to her war aims. American support is essential to force Germany to respect the Peace Treaty. Nothing else can make a conquered and rebellious Germany understand the necessity of fulfilling what she has signed. Nothing else can bring about the financial settlements, without which France cannot live. Nothing else can confirm the military guarantee which the United States promised to France, the far-sighted justice of which no one disputes. American support now can as nothing else ever will, ensure that future peaceful cooperation between France and America about which everyone is enthusiastic in principle but for which no one furnishes the means. For this to be possible Germany must pay, she must pay in every sense of the word. She must pay. She can pay. She will pay—as soon as she sees that all her conquerors—without exception—are determined that she shall pay.

Let there be no mistake; such a policy though of primary interest to France is the only one which can be of real and lasting service to Germany. Germany is untouched and will recover quickly—but on one condition. That essential condition is that she does not fall back into the hands of the militarists who would drag her and the rest of the world into a new war. German militarism lives in the

Digitized by Google

spirit. Ludendorff and Hugo Stinnes are the leaders of one and the same party. If this party prevails, Germany instead of working in peace will waste herself preparing for revenge. Germany will know peace and she will give peace to others only if she mends her ways, and she will not mend her ways unless she is forced to by a firm hand. The policy of renunciation bred by the Allies in 1920 was of no benefit to anyone except the German reactionaries. Fehrenbach replaced Muller. Spa marked the arrogant return of Stinnes. The more we yield, the bolder these men will become and the less will be our chances of peace. Germany will not turn towards fresh ideals until she knows that the Allies are determined to prevent her doing to-morrow that which she did yesterday. The first proof of this determination must be enforcement of the peace. For this determination to be effective it must be unanimous. The United States has here a duty to fulfill to save humanity and Germany herself from danger of another war, a war which will be sought by the Pan-Germanists all the more eagerly as they discern indecision and lack of unity in our ranks.

I can understand how after the storm many Americans weary of the intricacies of European affairs, may well ask themselves whether after all it would not be the part of wisdom for the United States to reduce its relations with the Old World to a minimum. That is an instinctive movement. In the spring of 1908, Roosevelt said to me:

"What the United States lacks most is an understanding of the fact that we have interests all over the world. I wish every American felt that American policy is a world policy and that we are and shall be identified in the future with all great questions. Some of us are aware of this. But the American people as a whole must be accustomed to the idea, they must learn to understand the meaning of our world interests."

Two days later Mr. Lodge, to whom I had mentioned this conversation, made a reservation.

"Let us understand each other," he said. "Our policy

Digitized by Google

is a world policy in so far as commerce is concerned. But I hold that we should not intervene in purely political questions outside of America. It is neither our interest nor our tradition. My policy and, I think I may say, the policy of our Senate, is the policy of George Washington."

And Senator Lodge added with a smile:

"You see, we support our President. We like him. But we are more constitutionalistic than he and more conservative."

I have recalled these old memories because they shed light on the present. Events stronger than principles or traditions threw the United States into a European war. But the war over, the conservative spirit of the Senate has re-asserted itself and throughout the country some regret has been felt for the old isolation. "Keep off!" Experience itself, that proved how impossible such pleasant ataraxia is at times, could not overcome force of habit. Americanism, in its negative and self-sufficient form, found many converts.

It is to these that my words are addressed. I quite understand their aversion to undertakings binding the United States to intervene in every Balkan or Eastern conflict. The generalized and abstract character of the Covenant explains many of the objections raised on this point. But the events of yesterday proved that there are European situations from which America cannot, whether she wishes it or not, remain aloof. The events of yesterday prove that no doctrine or principle of isolation can keep apart those who are united by common ideals and common interests. So just as long as the American people hope never to live again through an emergency such as led two million of their soldiers to the Marne and the Meuse, there is only one policy worth while, a policy that will prevent its recurrence. Now, whence comes the danger? Not from France certainly, who has suffered too much from the war not to have an earnest desire for peace. From Germany then? And the name of the danger is German militarism. To defend ourselves against militarism and its consequences

Digitized by Google

we waged war and we made peace. If we want the peace to last—Germany must be made to understand that peace is a sacred thing. If Germany does not understand this, if we do not force her to understand it, sooner or later we shall see the same causes produce the same effects, and once more the "doughboy" will have to cross the ocean. To avert this, the united action of the Allies of yesterday is necessary. To avert this, the United States—now and not later—must take her stand against Germany. Every weakness that encourages German Imperialism stimulates complications. Every division among the Allies sows the seed of future war. And as France and America both want peace, America must help us to enforce it—there is no other way of making the world safe. So long as America remains aloof, her power, whether she wills it or not, will play into the hands of those she fought against in the war.

Was I wrong when I said that the problem is political, and that the economic plans of financiers cannot solve it? To make war impossible we must all join in strengthening the Peace Treaty, which has too long been a "scrap of paper." And if the United States hesitates and seeks her way, let her thoughts turn to the valley of the Argonne, where thirty thousand white crosses bear witness to what America stood for in times of danger. America has not changed. America must make good the things she stood for, and she is free to choose her means. That is the problem of to-day. If it is not solved, peace of any kind will be unsafe. The dead will have died in vain.

The union of the three democracies—France, Great Britain and the United States—is the fundamental guarantee of world peace. That is reason enough for each of them to make all necessary sacrifices to maintain this union. At times England or America find France too uncompromising in her demands for her rights! Let them ask themselves what they would do if they were placed in her position. Then they will understand our state of mind. At times they accuse us of Imperialism. If France obtains the reparations which are her due—and she can obtain them only by

Digitized by Google

the support of her Allies—she will devote herself wholly to work and to progress in peace. It is only if she feels that she is abandoned by those who are pledged to support her that she might in her disappointment become the prey of extremists. Peace has not settled all problems. Peace to be finally established calls for the means which war and victory demanded. France, Great Britain and the United States still have duties to fulfill. These duties cannot be fulfilled unless the union of the three nations endures.

Note:—The events of the first three months of 1921 have not modified this conclusion. The Conference of Paris of January, 1921, agreed on a reduction of Germany's debt to France of sixty-five per cent. The refusal of Germany at the London Conference in the following month of March to sign this agreement fortunately prevented the coming into force of this unjust reduction. In spite of the economic sanctions taken at that time by the Allies, the mutilation inflicted in January upon the clauses of the Versailles Treaty has not been rectified. Miscomprehension continues.

THE END

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

3 2044 018 767 335

A FINE IS INCURRED IF THIS BOOK IS NOT RETURNED TO THE LIBRARY ON OR BEFORE THE LAST DATE STAMPED BELOW.

WIDENER
JAN 14 2002
CANCELLED

WIDENER
FEB 03 2002
JAN 14 2002
BOOK DUE
CANCELLED

WIDENER
SEP 10 1994
BOOK DUE
CANCELLED

WIDENER
JAN 20 2000
NOV 1 0 1996
CANCELLED

WIDENER
DEC 11 1998
CANCELLED

WIDENER
FEB 2 6 2000
JAN 20 2000
BOOK DUE
CANCELLED

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google